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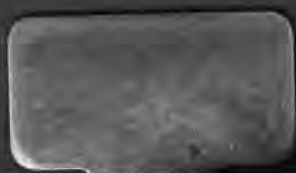
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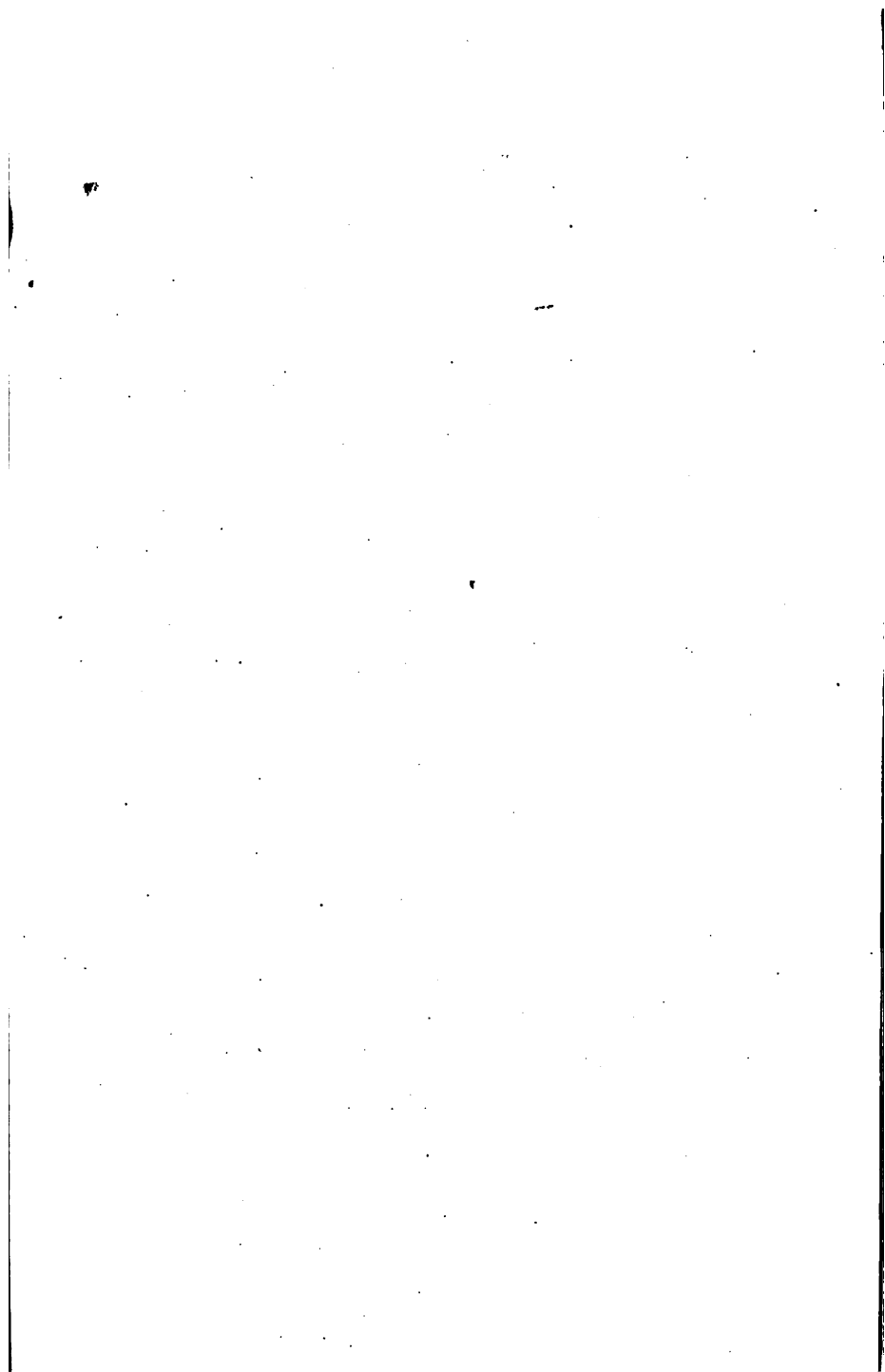






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THE  
Castle and the Cottage in  
Spain.

FROM the SPANISH of FERNAN CABALLERO.

By

LADY WALLACE.

Translator of "*Clara; or, Slave Life in Europe.*"

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

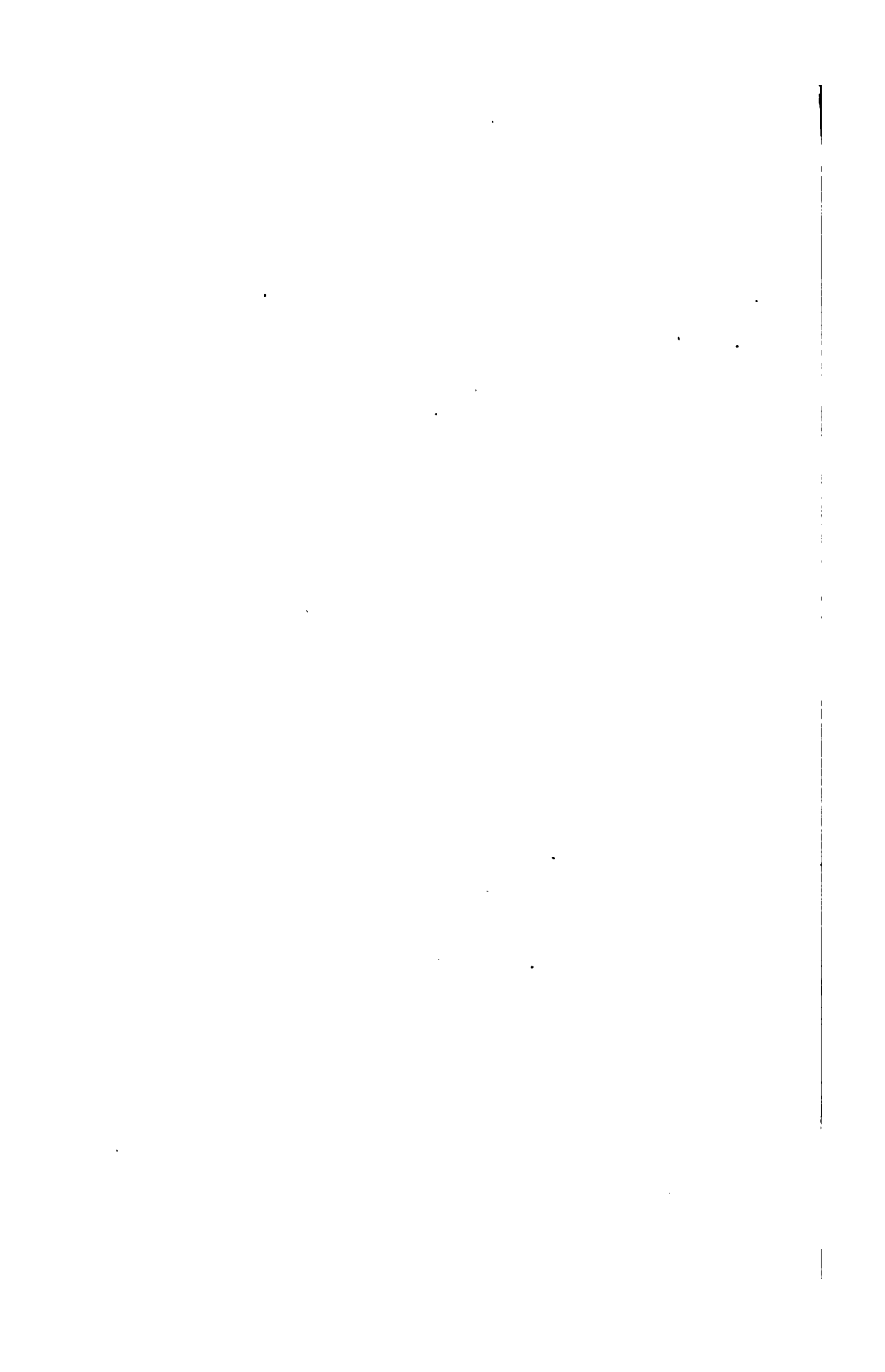


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# The Castle and the Cottage in Spain.

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*ELIA*;

or,

SPAIN THIRTY YEARS AGO.

## CHAPTER I.

ONE of those resplendent days was shining, which adorn Andalusia like a collar of brilliants. The sun was scattering its rays on every side, like a net of glittering gold; some transparent clouds, like white sails, displayed their undefined, diaphanous forms, in the pure azure of the sky, just as in a tranquil mind, vague, poetical conceptions arise and blossom. The sweet, fragrant atmosphere vibrated with the glorious sounds of all the bells of pious Seville, announcing the solemnity of

the day, attested also at intervals by the powerful voices of cannon. Gay coloured tapestry hung from all the balconies in the city, their bright hues blending as if animated by the universal jubilee.

The people in their gay costumes, their faces radiant with delight, embraced each other promiscuously. All this restless crowd was hastening towards the Cathedral, the splendid doors of which were thrown wide open, and whence rolled grandly forth the sounds of the magnificent organ, pealing to heaven the solemn notes of the *Te Deum*. The joy was unbounded, profound, unanimous, electrical, causing every heart to beat, dimming all eyes with tears of gladness, and inspiring a hymn of thanksgiving in every place and heart to the mighty Lord of Armies.

Fernando VII. had just been restored to the throne of his ancestors.

After the *Te Deum*, a procession, accompanied by the authorities and a brilliant train, were to carry along the streets a portrait of the legitimate and ardently wished for monarch.

Ladies, richly dressed, occupied the balconies, and the people thronged together

in the wake of the procession, which was preceded by music, and its path thickly strewn with flowers. An elderly lady, of animated and affable aspect, was seated in a balcony on a low seat, shedding tears of joy, and showering down flowers on the triumphal car containing the portrait of the king. She was dressed in a rich black silk gown; a handkerchief of fine black lace covered her shoulders; her mantilla was also of the most marvellous old point lace, placed carelessly on her silvery hair; round her throat was a magnificent row of enormous pearls, from which was suspended the portrait of the king, surrounded by large brilliants.

Behind this lady, leaning on the entrance of the balcony, was a gentleman, whose face had a simple and benevolent expression, and who held in his hand the basket from which the lady took the flowers.

On the left side of the balcony another lady was seated, grave and formal, richly though simply attired, disdaining to embellish a beauty which even time seemed to respect. Between them a lovely girl was standing, leaning on the ramp of the balcony, whose distinguished and unimpass-



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sioned style of beauty, was like that of an alabaster statue. The splendour of her dress seemed to occupy her as little as the admiration she attracted.

"Who is that young lady?" said an artillery officer, just arrived in Seville, to one of his friends.

"Esperanza Orrea, daughter of the Marquesa Val de Jara, seated beside her."

"Are you acquainted with her?" said the officer.

"Yes," answered his friend; "we are relations. Her great great grandmother was third cousin to mine. We trace every branch of our pedigree here, as eagerly as a pointer does a partridge."

"Then pray present me to the young lady," said the other; "the fair Esperanza has made a decided conquest of me."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the former. "All the members of this family, and their circle, are loyal, old fashioned people, and you, who are a Liberal, would have no better welcome from them than a dog at mass."

"I can wait, in that case," replied the artillery officer, "till the arrival of Carlos Orrea, who is my particular friend, and

quite as much a Liberal as I am, to present me to her, and to introduce into the family that tolerance which is as indispensable in ideas as in society; and the elderly lady who is with them, is she a relation?"

"This venerable lady, whose face is as wrinkled as a dried raisin, and her eyes small and bright, like black pepper, is Doña Isabel de Orrea, eldest sister of the deceased Marquès de Val de Jara, and widow of the powerful Asistente, or Chief Justice of Seville, whose long string of names I must give you—Asistente de Sevilla, Don Manuel Farface and Calatrava. She is an excellent person, and her history interesting; I have often heard it from my mother. At the age of seventeen she was very lovely, and the only daughter of the Marquès de Val de Jara; she was on the point of marriage with a man she truly loved. In the same year she lost her bridegroom, who was killed by a fall from his horse; she caught the small-pox, which disfigured her; her father married again, and had a son, whose birth deprived her both of her titles and her inheritance; but these severe trials could not embitter her admirable disposi-

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you will follow my advice, you will say, looking at the fair Esperanza, like the fox in the fable, 'The grapes are sour.'"

The officer looked at his friend, and said, with a smile, "Are these the counsels of a friend or a rival?"

"I!" exclaimed the other, with frank sincerity; "you are much mistaken. 'What can't be cured must be endured,' says the proverb, and I have no chance there."

"Who is the gentleman," continued the officer, "with them, dressed in black, in a kind of clerical costume?"

"He is son of the steward of the deceased magistrate, the Asistente, who educated him for the priesthood; but the good man could never take his first orders, owing to the smallness of his capacity. As, however, he wrote a clear, legible hand, he made him his secretary, and his widow continued him in the same post. He is the best man in the world, simple as a child, but devoted to his benefactress, with an amount of love, and respect, and ardent attachment, highly to his honour. His name is Don Benigno."

When the procession had passed, the Señoras de Calatrava and Orrea repaired

to the house of the former, who was on that day to give a grand banquet. The house was large and ancient. The outer courtyard was inlaid with tiles, and contained the stables and coach houses. This was divided by an iron screen from the inner court of the mansion, surrounded by three tiers of galleries, and supported by marble pillars. The fourth was encircled by an iron railing, separating it from the garden, which was very large, its thick, cut box, its ancient cypresses, and luxuriant orange trees, bearing witness to its vast antiquity. The trees were so ancient, that it was impossible to count the generations of birds which they had sheltered under their branches, and the generations of men they had overshadowed.

The somewhat austere aspect of this superb entrance, was enlivened by the fountain in the centre of the court, which offered its fresh, limpid waters to those who entered, and the soft murmurs of another in the garden, reviving and refreshing the flowers. The marble staircase was worthy of a palace. Half way up stairs, on the ample landing place, was a picture by Tobar, framed in the wall by a rich mould-

ing of plaster of Paris, representing the Saints Justa and Rufina, the patrons of Seville, as large as life; the arms of the family were painted *al fresco* on the ceiling. The saloon was large and square, and hung with crimson damask. The chairs and sofas were covered with the same material; the wood of the furniture was beech, beautifully sculptured, with gilt mouldings, and the chairs terminating in lion's claws, reposing on round gilt balls. The sofas were of the same wood, their high backs quite overtopping the persons seated on them. Between the windows were two pretty tables, delicately sculptured and gilt, and above them were placed two mirrors of verdant hue, enclosed in magnificent gilt frames, the designs of which were in the most exquisite taste. The four tables ornamenting the corners of the room were equally handsome, covered with Chinese toys and with exquisite Mexican fillagree ornaments of silver. The windows, possessing neither a view, nor protected by jalousies, admitted the light of day in all its splendour, regardless of the *petit jour* so admired and sought after by French coquetry; above the doors was represented the life of the Virgin. By

an obsequious piece of gallantry on the part of the painter, the ass, on which the Virgin was seated on her flight to Egypt, was marked with the device peculiar to the animals of the noble family of Calatrava, a circumstance which caused great enthusiasm in the grooms and bailiffs of the house, and was a source of no small pride to the secretary, Don Benigno; an impropriety of which the Asistentia was wholly unconscious.

The banquet, served on massive plate, eclipsed even Camacho's wedding feast. A whole chest of sugar was used in the fabrication of sweetmeats for dessert.

After dinner the Señora de Calatrava said,

"Now I can die in peace! for I have enjoyed the happiest day of my life. God has heard our supplications, and rewarded the brave and the loyal. My friends, let us drink to the health of our adored monarch."

This toast was drunk with unanimous acclamations.

"Now," said the Marquis de Val de Jara, "let us drink to the extermination of all the enemies of the altar and the throne,

those two holy and eternal foundations of society."

"No," replied the Asistentia, "on so happy a day as this, we must only drink to what is good, and not wish the ruin of any one. Let us drink, then, to the valiant defenders of our country, and to the happy return, sister, of your two gallant sons."



## CHAPTER II.

IN front of Seville, past Triana, a vast plain extends from the mountains, as if to slake its thirst in the waters of the Guadalquivir.

Ranges of undulating hills stretch towards the river, on whose banks they seem to deposit the small village of San Juan, adorned by a convent, erected on the ruins of a huge Moorish castle, like a cross on a turban. On the summits of this line of hills, the villages of Tomares, Castilleja de la Cuesta, and Castilleja de Guzman, are placed as if on the humps of dromedaries. In the plain are the villages of Camas and Santi-Ponce, who carefully preserve the lugubrious black flag, which they hoist, like a cry of anguish, when violent floods inundate the plain; and at their appeal

Seville opens her granaries, and sends her sons to succour their brothers.

Why enforce and inculcate so loudly the voice of *philanthropy*, when there is a voice more appropriate, more forcible, more sympathetic, more eloquent, which has always existed, and exercised immense power over Christians—the voice of charity, and Christian love?

Two young men were issuing from one of these villages, contemplating the magnificent prospect extended at their feet.

The one was tall and straight, his air noble and distinguished, and his features regular; he was dressed in the severe uniform of the Walloon Guard, and leaning against an olive tree. The other, rather younger and not so tall, was reclining on the grass; on his left shoulder hung an elegant Hussar's pelisse; he had taken off his shako, and the breeze was blowing about the curls of his black hair.

"I am very glad, Fernando," said the Hussar, "that we agreed to take the road to Badajoz, and that my horse having thrown a shoe, enables us to enjoy this splendid view. How deeply rooted is our love of the spot where we were born, a love

that time and absence only augment. How happy I feel in once more seeing the gay Giralda; that at least the French could not deprive us of. Ah!" continued he, "enthusiasm does not prove fatal to life, or few Spaniards would now be alive—old men, children, women, monks, laymen, rich and poor, all, all utter the same cry of gladness! a cry like this, Fernando, cannot fail to reach Heaven."

"Assuredly, Carlos. It has reached Heaven!" said the Walloon Guard, with feeling.

"I certainly," said the Hussar, "would not exchange my titles of Spaniard, and adjutant of Palafox, for those of any hereditary prince in the most brilliant European States; I would rather be a poor, ill dressed soldier in my own country, than the proudest veteran in other lands. I prefer our ruins to their palaces. But now, Fernando, we have at last the privilege of reposing on our laurels, legitimate laurels gained against foreigners and aggressors; against those who assailed our liberties; laurels which time cannot wither, nor envy cause to fade! but," continued he, suddenly changing his tone, "do you know, Fer-

nando, that, accustomed now to a different kind of life, I fear that I shall weary sadly of the quiet habits of my own family? You will say, they only strictly observe the glad festivals of the Church; but they don't amuse me. We often entertain the worthy Father Salvador of the Capuchins, a holy man, whom I revere, but—he does not amuse me. At night the Tertulias in my worthy aunt's house, where they play ombre, and yawn—do not amuse me.

“I suppose I must have recourse to the same pranks I formerly diverted myself with. Do you remember, Fernando, the night when my aunt came to visit us, in her ancient family coach, drawn by the old mules, with her old coachman Juan, and her old and well beloved escort Don Benigno, and I cut the reins and traces while Juan was sleeping; who justly placing the most entire confidence in his team, looked on them as sure and safe anchors; and when at their departure my aunt and her *cavaliere servente* were installed in the coach, Juan lashed the mules, who began to cut no end of capers, turning round their heads, and staring at the coach that remained stock still? Do you remember

Juan's face, with the reins in one hand, and his uplifted whip in the other, his eyes starting out of his head, and his mouth wide open with amazement, at seeing the unexpected emancipation of his mules, hitherto so docile and so sober minded? I think I see now Don Benigno's frightened face stuck out of the window, not a little alarmed at seeing the divorce, without any official decree, between the coach and the mules, who had lived for so many years in the most peaceful and harmonious union; and then, in the midst of the silent pause that ensued, the voice of my aunt was heard, saying, 'A trick of Carlos! the graceless scamp, who is amusing himself at my expense. Take care, you scapegrace; see if I don't send you to prison to-morrow for this!' And another time, when I tied the table of a woman, who sold chesnuts, to the carriage, and when the wheels began to revolve, the table followed, giving as many leaps and jumps as a rope dancer, while the woman to whom it belonged rushed after the deserter, screaming."

"But, Carlos," said his more staid brother, "all these tricks were very bad even then, but now they would be quite unpar-

donable. My aunt would be justly grieved and indignant."

"Grieved! indignant!" answered Carlos; "you don't know her, Fernando. After such pranks, I was invariably higher in her good graces than ever! One day when I abstracted the key of Maria's store room, and helped myself to a quantity of her chocolate and sweetmeats, my mother, when my misconduct was reported to her, only condemned me, with her usual lenity, to three days of bread and water. I went to my aunt's house, and, groaning and weeping, told her, that her sister's son was dying of hunger. She took me with her instantly to the dining room, and crammed me so tremendously with pastry and sweetmeats, that I had a severe indigestion in consequence; and the good Benigno, with what admirable patience did he endure my tricks, without even once giving me the satisfaction of seeing him irritated or impatient!"

"A strange kind of satisfaction, I must say," observed Fernando. Carlos was laughing heartily at the remembrance of these childish pieces of mischief. "But, brother," continued Fernando, "remember

that you are no longer a boy; that it is your duty to show as much respect as love for our aunt, who is our second mother, and loves us with all the tenderness of one. Do not forget that your inheritance will be small, and that your fate depends on her."

"My good Fernando," answered Carlos, "I love and esteem my aunt, because she is, as you say, a second mother to us, because she is the best of aunts, and the best of women; because, without an atom of silliness, she has all the candour and simplicity of a girl, and the heart of an angel; but as to your second caution, it will never weigh with me. I ever refrain from any line of conduct from cold calculations! at my age, and with my disposition! Put that out of your head altogether, Fernando."

"But your future prospects....." observed his brother.

"Are certainly not those of a millionaire," answered Carlos. "I have inherited a house worth eighty thousand reals, burdened with an annuity of ninety thousand; an olive plantation burnt by the French, and a vineyard that produces no-

thing but vinegar; but what of that? '*l'or est une chimère*,' as the French sung while pillaging our land; but have I not my good sword and *you?*'"

Fernando smiled with delight at hearing these last words, and said, "You speak like the dearest of brothers, and the best of friends."

At this moment a servant arrived, to say that the horses were ready.

It was late when they arrived at the house of their mother, the Marquesa de Val de Jara, who had just gone to the Tertulia of her sister-in-law, where she generally arrived half an hour before the other guests.

The brothers, therefore, immediately repaired to their aunt's house. How great was the delight of all, in seeing the two young men, who had left their home almost boys, and now returned in health and safety, their breasts covered with well-merited crosses of honour, won in a long and bloody war. The Marquesa, pale and motionless, was silent from excess of emotion.

The Asistenta (their worthy aunt) shed a profusion of tears; their sister, Esperanza, embraced her brothers alternately;



Don Benigno clasped his hands, and raised his eyes to Heaven and his heart to God. All the old attached servants crowded into the room, pressing forwards to greet the brothers, with that familiarity which their pride demands as a privilege, but which never becomes too free or presuming, owing to their innate delicacy and tact.

Carlos, in the highest spirits, embraced every one, especially Don Benigno, whom he fairly lifted off his feet, saying, when he saw him so placid, "I have been promoted from a cornet to be a captain, but you have been promoted from Benigno to Benignissimo. I must decorate you with the Grand Cross! Juan," said he to the coachman, "I have no longer got a knife to cut the reins of your mules—how are the old Methusalites, do they walk on crutches?—but my sabre will serve the purpose. I give you fair warning!"

"Oh!" said the coachman, "you have used it for better purposes."

"Maria," continued Carlos, turning to the housekeeper, "I have not lost my taste for sweetmeats; take care of your keys, and keep a sharp look out on the door of your store room."

"Ah, Señorito!" answered the good woman, drying her eyes, "the keys, the sweetmeats, the chocolate, and all I have, is at your disposition."

"What handsome lads they are, to be sure. They look like two generals!"

"Aunt," said Fernando, "I fill up the measure of your joy, by announcing the speedy arrival of Clara, whose physician has ordered her to pass the winter in Andalucia, as her health is rather delicate."

"This was indeed the only thing wanting to perfect my delight," exclaimed the Asistentá, joyfully.

In the meantime, Carlos was turning his eyes in every direction.

"Aunt," said he at length, "nothing is changed here. Your house, Señora, seems like a watch that has stopped. I see nothing new, except the portrait of our long nosed king."

"Long nosed!" exclaimed the Asistentá. "How can you presume to make use of such an expression with regard to your sovereign. Heavens! what irreverence."

"Irreverence!" said Carlos, "may not a king possess a nose rather longer than his

neighbour's? Do you call it irreverence to allude to the fact, aunt?"

"I certainly do!" exclaimed the Asis-  
tenta, indignantly; "for even if he had a  
proboscis like an elephant, it would be  
irreverent in his subjects to notice it, and  
still more indecorous to mention it. My  
dear nephew, the crown is a sacred thing,  
and consecrates him who wears it by right  
Divine."

"Who is attacking the Crown, Señora?"  
replied Carlos, laughing; "and what has  
the Crown to do with the length of his  
Majesty's nose?"

"I tell you, Carlos, that such an ex-  
pression is of a hostile, irreverent nature  
—a nickname which could only be in-  
vented by a Revolutionist or repeated by a  
Liberal."

"My dear aunt, you say the word  
*Liberal* as if you were saying *Frenchman*  
or insurgent. A Liberal is not a bugbear,  
he is a good and true Spaniard."

"Ave Maria!—What do you say?  
What are you talking about?" exclaimed  
the Asistenta. "An Orrea, a Liberal,  
and hand and glove with the *canaille*?"

Have you taken leave of your senses, boy?"

"With whom have you been associating?" said the Marquesa, in a severe voice. "Possibly you have been at Cadiz, the cradle of those enemies, almost more terrible than the French themselves, who were employed in poisoning the true hearts of Spaniards, while the loyal sons of our land were shedding their noble blood in her defence?"

"He must be mad!" exclaimed the Asistenta.

"I fear he is perverted, which is worse," said the Marquesa.

"Heaven help me!" replied Carlos, undaunted. "What an explosion! What an eruption! What an infernal machine! What, then, is your idea, ladies, of a *Liberal*? Do you think that he is a man who massacres infants like Herod or Robespierre?"

"If they are not Robespierres, they are nearly as bad, and steer the same course," said the Marquesa.

"A Liberal," rejoined the Asistenta, "is a person who wishes to destroy the Throne and the privileges of the Crown, who wishes

to demolish convents, and religion, and hereditary nobility; to ensure the ruin of Spain by introducing foreign customs; and to overthrow the laws of nature, by declaring that we are all on an equality. Insufferable creatures!"

"No, aunt, no; you are deceived, prejudiced, ill informed. A Liberal is a man who wishes to further the progress of the century, and not to go to sleep on past glories. You are entirely mistaken, if you believe otherwise. True Liberals will never recognise any other government than that of which the King is the head and the representative, the sole authority accepted and admitted by the Catholic religion."

"This," said the Marquesa, vehemently, "is the way they gild the pill, which, when once swallowed, will diffuse its fatal and venomous poison. Time would already have proved this, even if those men who were engaged in the revolution in France, had not commenced their career by the very same high sounding phrases, and that remembrance opened the eyes of our King and his counsellors. I cannot understand," added she, turning to Fernando, "that you

can see with composure this apostacy of a cavalier from his blood, of a Catholic from his principles, of a son from the authority of his family."

"Mother," answered Fernando, "I do not think that two brothers, so fondly attached, should be disunited by political opinions. Still, I must say, Carlos, that you ought to have remembered that no one, and still less a son, has a right to offend the opinions of his elders and his relations."

"I certainly might have borne in mind," answered Carlos, "the fact that intolerance is the badge of a mode of thinking opposed to mine."

"It is not its badge," said the Marquesa, "but its just type. Error is tolerant, but truth condemns."

"And who is to be the competent judge of this?" said Carlos.

"God in Heaven, experience on earth," answered the Marquesa.

"Sister," interposed the Asistenta, "what Carlos has said gives a very different aspect to the subject. Those who recognise and respect the rights of the Altar and the Throne, and love the King and the Ca-

tholic faith, whatever their other opinions may be, must on all essential points be in accord with us. So, my dear boy, provided you never again allude to the long nose of his sacred Majesty, we shall remain friends and be in entire harmony. There is not a straw of difference between a Liberal of your description and an old fashioned loyal subject like me."

"None whatever, aunt," replied Carlos; "the only difference is that you may say stop, while I call out get on!"

## CHAPTER III.

THE family mansion of the Condé de Palma was all prepared, and the different relatives assembled in it, to receive the Condesa.

"What a quantity of luggage Clara has sent forward," said the Asistentia; "I see such numbers of boxes and packing-cases, that it seems to me she must have emptied half the shops in London and Paris."

"Women everywhere nowadays," observed the Marquesa, "seem to have no thought but to amuse themselves, to dress well, and to enjoy the luxuries of wealth. I tell you that they have a passion for being amused! You may be very sure that the medical men send Clara here, chiefly to remove her from a life of constant recklessness, where night is turned into day, and pleasure into excitement, where heads are



frivolous and hearts hard, where health is injured, and noble patrimonies squandered!"

"I feel rather uneasy about Clara," said the Asistenta, "for she was always as fragile as a blossom of jessamine. I don't at all approve of the remedy of this famous doctor whom she is to bring with her, whose regimen for her is chicken broth—no better than whey!"

"Fernando says that this physician, who enjoys a great reputation both among the faculty and as a philosopher, is an insufferable pedant and *esprit fort*, as those of his class are called. He also comes here for the benefit of his health."

"Heaven help us!" exclaimed the Asistenta; "I trust he will never enter my doors. But I can tell you, that if I hear him speaking against the King and religion, I will attack him, as Santiago did the Moors! I won't overlook one disagreeable remark. Just as certainly as that two and three make five. And you, Inéz?"

"I shall avoid all disagreeable discussions, by refusing to receive him," said the Marquesa.

At this moment a travelling *calèche* drove up to the door, and shortly after

the Condesa entered, accompanied by Carlos and Fernando, who had gone to meet her. She was about five and twenty, graceful and pretty, though rather pale and delicate looking; she was simply, but elegantly, dressed in the foreign style; she wore a wadded silk pelisse, trimmed with splendid furs; a very full tulle handkerchief was tied round her throat; cambric frills, beautifully embroidered, fell over her little white hands; and a simple *capote* of green silk completed her costume. She embraced her aunts and her cousin, with the most lively demonstrations of joy and tenderness.

"I see no change in you, my dear aunts," said she; "and it is actually eight years—half a lifetime—since I saw you! Esperanza, however, whom I left a little girl of ten years old, I find a lovely woman! Yes, you certainly are a very pretty creature, my dear cousin," continued she, embracing Esperanza, who blushed; "only, my dear, you are horridly *fagotée*."

"Pray what is that?" asked the Asis-tenta.

"Ill dressed," answered the Condesa.

"Ill dressed!" rejoined the Asistenta, in

amazement. "What can you mean, my dear creature? A silk dress, with buttons and rows of fringe a quarter of a yard deep; straps and shoulder knots; a cap of silk gauze, embroidered in gold; a mantilla, worked in round stitch; open lace silk stockings; white satin shoes; and a gold comb. Why, Clara! what would you have?"

"It is indispensable," answered Clara, "to give a fuller sweep to the skirt, to demolish this fabric of curls. And you, aunt, still wearing your own white hair! This is quite ridiculous, and a mark of being sadly behind the fashion. I have brought you from Paris a lovely *peruque*, and a lace head dress, in the best taste."

"Virgin of Carmen!" exclaimed the Asistenta. "I wear a wig?—I wear a lace head dress? Do you wish to make me the derision and the laughing stock of every human being? Do you wish me to be removed to a lunatic asylum? I—a wig? Heaven help me!"

"It will take ten years from your age, aunt."

"But, niece, I don't want to get rid of

my years. If I could do so in reality, I should not be sorry, but in appearance only, what good would it do? Do you imagine that I wish to make any conquests? An old woman like me, with hair as white as that of a rabbit!"

"A very accomplished lady," replied the Condesa, "said, that she took the trouble to make herself up, not in the hope of looking pretty, but less ugly."

"But as I have no wish of the kind, I tell you once for all, Clara, that I have no wish to wear at the end of my life, tumpety *falbalas*, which I never adopted, even when I was a girl; that I and my white hair are on the best terms together, and that if you would give me an image of gold, I would not wear dead hair on my head."

"Tell me, Clara, why are you travelling with this escort? Pray what has become of your husband?" asked the Asistentita.

"It is several days since I had a letter from the Condé," answered Clara.

"I did not inquire for the Condé, but for Juan Maria, your husband," said the Asistentita.

"And I answered your question under that belief," answered Clara.

"How?" exclaimed her aunt; "do you call your husband the Condé?"

"And pray is not that his title?" replied Clara.

"Nonsense, child!" said the Asistenta. "Tell me, do you really address him thus?"

Clara jumped up and embraced her aunt, saying, "Aunt, it is understood between people of true fashion, and in those also who make pretensions to *bon ton*, that they should call their husband by his title when he has one, and if not, say Señor."

"Odd enough, certainly! Well, we must live and learn. Does this *bon ton* extend to fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins? In order to attain *bon ton*, must we be careful to call you Condesa, my child?"

"Oh, no!" replied Clara, kissing her aunt's hand affectionately. "Certainly not!"

"Then," continued the Asistenta, "this form is only used with regard to your husband, as less closely connected, and

requiring to be addressed with more politeness."

"I suppose, my dear, this same *bon ton* was invented by those happy couples who devised another branch of *bon ton*, that of separate apartments? Long live *bon ton*!"

"How ugly and old fashioned all this furniture is," said the Condesa, looking round on all sides; "this is the mansion of misanthropy. Heavens! what chairs!—they would require a steam engine to move them. These ridiculous sconces, in the shape of cornucopiæ, must have been used at the wedding feast of Mari-Castañas! What a frightful gloomy damask; how sombre and grim these picture frames are! This saloon is enough to cause an attack of blue devils in Brunet himself!"

"Gloomy! ridiculous!" exclaimed the Asistentá, indignantly. "Where did you ever see, in any foreign country, furniture more rich or more exquisitely sculptured and splendidly gilt? What can be more sumptuous than this silk damask? or what walls more magnificently decorated than these, with paintings by Velasquez and Murillo,

of such value, that they are entailed, to ensure their preservation?"

"It is all very well in its way, and very appropriate for a church," answered the Condesa; "but it is neither suitable for the saloons of society nor fashionable. You shall soon see, aunt, how I mean to transform everything, and how much you will think the house improved afterwards."

"You are mistress of your own house, niece, of course, and can do what you think fit; but as for me, I warn you fairly, that the smallest alterations will not only be repugnant to my feelings, but distress me exceedingly. Believe me, Clara, that antiquity imparts to families, to houses, and to furniture, a seal of nobility, envied by the moderns, for they cannot compensate for them, by unstable riches nor by evanescent fashions, without any sure foundations. At the end of some years, what you mean to place in these rooms now, will be considered vulgar, and retain no impress of its epoch. It will be old without being antique; and it is very possible that the weathercock you call fashion, and *bon ton* may adore by that time what it now turns into ridicule!"

"Oh, aunt!" said Clara, quickly, to cut short the conversation, and to avoid contradicting her aunt, whom she dearly loved, "tell me about your adopted child, Elia. Is she as precious as ever? Where is she, that I have not yet seen her?"

"Elia," answered the Asistenta, evidently gratified, "is as charming as ever. She has been now in a convent for six years; because they all told me that I spoilt her so much, she would learn nothing beside me."

"But you don't mean that she is never to leave the convent?" said Clara, eagerly.

"No, certainly not," answered her aunt; "for though she is very happy there, it is proper and fitting that she should leave it, and resume her place in my house. If she then prefers the convent, it will be time enough for her to return there."

"A pretty supposition!" exclaimed Clara. "You certainly ought to have taken her away a year ago, and you would have spared her a year of *ennui*."

"She is never tired," said her aunt; "she is always amiable and contented, and so far from wishing to leave her convent,



it will cost her many tears when that moment arrives."

"It is quite necessary that she should know the world, and life, and enjoy her youth," said the Condesa. To imprison such youth and beauty, would really be quite monstrous, aunt!"

"How I long to see her!" exclaimed Carlos; "how often we played together when we were children. Esperanza always defended her against me, who delighted in plaguing her—do you remember, sister?"

"Yes, yes," said the Asistenta, "you were always a precious imp!"

"You will send for her, aunt, won't you?" said Carlos. "I promise neither to frighten her, nor to make her shed tears."

"Yes, I will certainly send for her," replied the Asistenta; "and then," continued she, with emotion, "I shall be surrounded by all whom I love in this world. I can't bring her too soon, can I, Inés?" She turned to her sister-in-law in saying these last words, for she was so accustomed to rely on the firm and lucid judgment, and the well known prudence of the Marquesa, that she never felt completely satis-

fied with her resolutions, if not sanctioned by her opinion.

The Marquesa, who evidently disapproved of the turn the conversation had taken, contented herself by replying, "You know, sister, 'The fool knows more of his own house, than the clever man does of the house of another.'"

Just as the Asistenta, with her usual frankness and vivacity, was about to answer, there appeared on the threshold of the door an elderly man, tall, thin, gaily dressed, and wearing gold spectacles on his sharp pointed nose; he walked with difficulty, having been suffering from gout.

"This," said the Condesa, as soon as she saw him, "is our intimate friend, Don Narciso Delgado, to whose care and science you owe the satisfaction of seeing me now alive. He is a person who can recommend himself far better than I can. I beg you will all look upon him in the light I do—as one of the family."

Don Narciso Delgado bowed with more affected politeness than real courtesy, apologising for appearing in his travelling costume.

"What a puppet of a creature!" whis-

pered the Asistenta to her sister; "he looks to me as if his diet consisted entirely of his favourite chicken broth."

Don Benigno took advantage of this moment to approach Clara, and to welcome her with much deference.

"Ah, my friend, Don Benigno!" said she, with affability; "how absent I must have been, not to have remembered you. How glad I am to see you looking so well, and not a day older."

"Who is this schoolmaster?" said Don Narciso, in a pretty audible voice, to the Condesa, casting a contemptuous glance at the inelegant and commonplace figure of the secretary.

"He is the son of....." begun Clara, but she was interrupted by the Asistenta, who said, with emphasis,

"It is Don Benigno Cordero, *my friend*. I hope and request, sir, that you will consider him a member of *my* family, as *I* do."

Don Benigno blushed like a boy. He was what the world calls a simpleton, but what a profound observer would call a worthy man, with a loyal heart. He had not a very brilliant understanding—and of what use would it have been to him?

understanding is a luxury, sometimes useless, often pernicious, sometimes a torch, oftener a brand, according to the hands which use it, and, as Lavergne says, it is the worst enemy of the heart—but if he was not distinguished for talent, Don Benigno, on the other hand, possessed that degree of common sense which, though it may not make a man as brilliant as the sun, at all events entitles him to be considered a fixed star.

He rarely asked advice about the small cycle of affairs that he managed, not from despising the opinion of others, but because he never vacillated in his purposes. If he was not capable of an heroic action, at all events he contributed all he could to the comfort of others, and if occasionally deficient in energy and strength, he had not a single evil inclination. He looked on the passions of men as infirmities, lamenting over them, but not casting blame on any one. His benevolence led him to excuse the faults of others, although his own upright conduct entitled him to be severe. Don Benigno possessed another good quality, which is daily disappearing, so much so, that our grandchildren will

40     The Castle and the Cottage in Spain.

seek it, as our ancestors did the philosopher's stone—I mean a true and vivid appreciation of men and things; thus it was, that without any calculation on his part, he received a reflected light from others. He was attached to the benefactress, to whom he owed so much, with the love and fidelity of a dog; and we wish it to be understood, that in making use of this simile, it is because we consider it the most perfect we can find.

## CHAPTER IV.

ON the following morning, the Asistentia rose at her usual hour, seven o'clock, and went to church. She heard two services, seated on a low chair brought to her by a boy; she inquired about the priest, who had been ill, from the sacristan; she deliberately examined an altar piece that she very much admired; she repeated her orisons; reproved a boy who was behaving irreverently; deposited her alms in the poor box, and distributed various sums to those poor people, who were watching for her at the door, and returned home with a light heart—having begun the day by prayer and good works—and with a good appetite, having risen early, and taken exercise. She went to the dining room,

where breakfast was served, consisting of eggs, ham, chocolate, and cakes.

She then went to a small business room, where she found a number of papers and letters on a table, and Don Benigno prepared to read them to her. These consisted chiefly of letters of convocation, announcements of marriages, of changes of residence, of births and of deaths; among the latter was that of a good and respectable man, whose poor widow was left in a deplorable state of destitution.

"I shall go to that house of mourning," said the good Señora; "I must go early, before the funeral."

She was about to leave the room, but Don Benigno detained her, saying that he had a letter from her agent in Madrid, about a lawsuit there.

"I have no time to listen to it," said the Asistentia; "I am going to the house of the poor widow," and saying this, she again went towards the door.

"Señora!" exclaimed Don Benigno, in alarm, having glanced at the letter, "we have lost the suit—only listen to this!"

"No," answered the Señora, with the

same serenity ; "I told you I had no time."

"But, Señora," pursued Don Benigno, in perplexity, "the agent says we must appeal to the Council."

"Heaven forbid!" replied the Asistentá.

"And why, Señora?"

"In the first place, because I detest lawsuits, and I rejoice that this one is at an end, even though I have lost it; in the second, I have heard that our opponents are very poor, whereas we are rich; in the third, as these first judges have condemned our cause, they are sure to be in the right."

The Asistentá was going, when Benigno exclaimed, sorrowfully, "We are condemned to pay costs, too---how are we to manage this?"

"By putting our hands in our pockets, and taking out the money," said the Señora. "Is there not plenty of oil in our storehouses, and grain in our granaries?---sell these."

"Sell, to get money!" exclaimed Benigno, considerably scandalized, being a faithful and zealous steward. "No, Señora, no; prices are very low, just now. You have



plenty of money all ready—it is not on this account I am vexed—we have more than enough to defray the costs, but the accounts are exorbitant. Do look at them.”

“I really cannot just now, especially as I have not my spectacles. I told you that I was pressed for time, as I was going to the house of the poor widow.”

“Here is a letter,” said Benigno, “which looks very like a petition.”

The Asistenta stopped, and turned round to listen. Benigno, absorbed in his accounts, did not remark this. “Well, what are the contents of the letter?” said the Asistenta.

“I beg your pardon, Señora,” said Benigno, with an embarrassed air; “but as you told me you had no time.....”

“And when have I not time to listen to the supplications of the poor?” said the worthy lady.

Benigno opened the letter, and read,

“Señora, an unhappy woman, stretched on straw, applies to you, whose charity, madam, is so well known, for assistance. I am as entirely helpless and destitute as the day I was born. I entreat of you to send me some clothes to cover me, that at

the approaching hour of death, my guardian angel may not turn away his eyes from me, scandalized at my want of clothing. By this good work at the glad time of approaching Christmas, God will amply reward you for your charity, both in this life and in the world to come.”<sup>1</sup>

The Asistentá called Maria, saying, “You must go to see this poor woman, Maria, and take with you all that she wants. Don Benigno, apprise the doctor and the chemist that all necessary medicines are to be furnished to her, on my account. By the by, so long as I remember, let me ask, was my bill last month larger than usual?”

“No, Señora—six hundred reals.”<sup>2</sup>

“So far well, as this proves the health of the community to be good. Now, I will not be detained another moment. Maria, my mantilla!”

Before proceeding further, we must say a few words about this excellent servant. Maria was a woman of fifty six, extremely

<sup>1</sup> This letter is a fact.

<sup>2</sup> This is so far from being exaggerated, that we could name many ladies whose monthly account in shops for relieving the poor, exceeds this sum.

tidy, active, quick, and faithful, but positive, argumentative, and grumbling. In her youth, she had been for many years maid to the Asistentita. She then married a schoolmaster, and had two boys, but in the year of the great plague, she lost her husband, her two boys, and a little delicate baby that she was nursing. The Asistentita at this time requiring a nurse for Elia, Maria returned to her former home in this capacity, and was afterwards permanently re-established there as housekeeper. She was, to use a common expression, the right hand of the Señora, who was much attached to her, placing entire confidence in her, and entrusting to her and her butler Pedro, the management of her establishment. Neither secrets, nor keys of any kind, were kept from Maria. She volunteered her opinion on all points, but we must admit, always with prudence and judgment. Her lady had communicated to her, on the previous evening, her intention of bringing from the convent the girl she had nursed, which had quite turned the good woman's head with joy, as she was very excitable.

The Asistentita was just crossing the threshold, when the Marquesa entered.

"What bright thought has brought you here so early?" said the Asistentia on seeing her.

"I wish to speak to you alone," answered the Marquesa.

Don Benigno, after having respectfully saluted the Marquesa, who esteemed him highly, withdrew; Maria followed him out, but rather in bad humour.

"A visit at this hour," she kept muttering, "betokens no good. I can scent out the reason; it is to give advice that is not wanted. I wish I were as sure of a fine estate, as that the Marquesa wishes to double the locks on the doors of the convent where my Elia is—this child of my heart. She had never any liking for her, and always said she was spoiled by us all."

The two ladies having seated themselves on a sofa, the Marquesa said, "Dearest Isabel, yesterday you asked my opinion about your proposal to fetch Elia from her convent."

"Yes," said the Asistentia, recalling instantly with displeasure the conversation of the previous day, "and I perfectly remember, sister, your disagreeable reply."

"It was not the moment to discuss freely

and leisurely so important a matter, for, in my opinion, the step you are about to take requires considerable reflection. Above all, Isabel, what is her place to be?"

"At my side," answered the Asistenta.

"But on what footing? what title is she to have?"

"That of my daughter."

"And have you ascertained whether people are disposed to concede to her a position and a name to which she has no right?"

"Who will venture to dispute it, when it is my wish and by my authority?"

"Those who know that it is not in your power, nor in that of any one else, to undo the past; those who know that legitimacy, this holy and noble process, which created nobility, does not tolerate grafts in its mighty stem, nourishing its own branches alone, far less can it endure a parasite."

"Grant me patience, Inés!" answered the Asistenta; "so to love and appreciate this angelic girl, people must first examine her pedigree, and her baptismal register? Would you ever dream of asking whether the rose, whose beauty and perfume de-

light you, was planted in a vase of valuable porcelain, or in a coarse earthen vessel?"

"It is absurd to look on people in this world, as you do on flowers in a conservatory," replied the Marquesa; "we must consider the matter in a more serious light, the future must not be left to chance, and to the mercy of every blast like a weathercock. True affection is not blind, but foresees the future. What happiness have you in your power to offer to this girl in the world, to compensate for that she enjoys in her convent, where too she wishes to remain?"

"None."

"Then why do you wish to remove her from it?"

"From the love I bear her."

"A very ill judged kind of love, Isabel."

"To understand such love, you must first feel it, Inés."

"But what advantages are to accrue either to her or to you, from this project?"

"She will have the advantage, before professing her vows, of knowing what she renounces, and making a free election of the life she prefers. Is it my part to hide from her the pleasures of the world, in case

she may be too much attracted by them? Certainly not. As for me, I wish to have her with me, to cheer and enliven my latter years, just as the nightingale exhilarates declining day by its warbling. When I die, it will be time enough then for her to return to her convent if she wishes."

"Sister, may that day be distant indeed! but, Isabel, in order to decide on any matter, it is necessary and wise to foresee all the results it may produce, and to consider it under every aspect."

"Inés, if the dread of ultimate, indefinite results were allowed to embarrass our well intentioned proceedings, very few would be carried into effect."

"At all events, Isabel, do not be in a hurry. Take time, and think it well over; it will be time enough hereafter."

"Sister," said the Asistentá, warmly, "he who goes through the narrow lane *hereafter*, arrives in the broad street of *never*."

"Foresight and prudence have prevented many misfortunes, Isabel."

"But prudence has also stifled many good intentions, Inés."

"If, however, nothing I have said has any weight with you," said the Marquesa rising; "if you are resolved to pursue your purpose, without pausing to meditate on what you are going to do; as all my advice is vain, and appears only to annoy you, I can do no more, except to beg you will remember that I gave it, and to hope you may never live to repent not having followed it."

Scarcely had the Marquesa departed, when Maria appeared with a face that looked like a point of interrogation.

The Asistentia, like every one of an impulsive disposition, having been all her life spoiled and happy, was rather despotic, and highly esteemed her own opinion; and the more so on this occasion as her heart responded to it.

"Maria," said she to her housekeeper, "put on your mantilla immediately, and after you have seen the poor sick woman, go to the convent, and say to the abbess from me, with all proper forms of civility, that I hope it will suit her to allow my dear Elia to come to me three days' hence; that it is time she should assume her proper place in my family, and that my



relations are anxious to see her again; and now I am going to the widow's house, and no one shall detain me, not even a bishop, were one to arrive."

Saying this, she went out, leaving Maria full of joy. The good housekeeper with her Andalucian acuteness, had divined the motive of the Marquesa's visit, and knowing the character of her mistress, her suspicions were confirmed by the orders she had just received.

"What business has she," said Maria to herself, "to come here with her prudent advice, her worldly views, and her proud ideas? but all these are shivered to bits against the solid goodness of my lady's heart."

## CHAPTER V.

SOME days after, the Asistentá and Don Benigno were seated in the apartment of the former. Benigno was reading the *Christian Year*.

"Pray have done with the *Christian Year*," said the Señora impatiently; "the chapter to day seems quite endless. Give me a few pages of *Don Quixote*."

Don Benigno obeyed, casting a sad glance at Padre Croiset's book, with which his grave and devout nature sympathised more than with *Don Quixote*, the tendency of which was instinctively repugnant to him; being shocked that a cavalier with such good and chivalrous intentions, should always appear to so much disadvantage; but scarcely had he been reading five

minutes, when the Señora interrupted him again.

"No more, no more! Don Benigno," she exclaimed, "I detest that tale of Dorothea; besides, to-day, your reading is really so monotonous, that I almost imagine I hear a set of monks singing psalms. What o'clock is it?"

"A quarter past one," answered the reader, drawing out a silver watch as large and as round as a turnip.

"Do go and let me know if they are in sight," said the Asistenta; "I am not well enough to-day to watch myself—that tiresome Maria knows that well; but she, when she begins to gossip, never knows when to stop."

"As the nuns are so fond of the girl," suggested Benigno, "probably the farewells will be long and tender."

"My family too, who promised to be here by two o'clock, will not find her," continued the Asistenta. "Inés was the only one who did not offer to come to see her; she neither wishes to conceal, nor can conceal, the annoyance she feels, at the dear girl having left her convent, and she thus disturbs the great pleasure I feel, in having

her henceforth always with me. This is not right of Inés, especially as I never in my life embittered any pleasure of her's."

"Señora," answered Benigno, "I never observed anything of the kind, and it seems to me impossible that the Marquesa can disapprove of anything you do."

"Oh!" said the Asistenta, more impatiently than ever, "so far as observation goes, you would not even remark a set of flying mules; and as for excuses, you are capable, my good friend, of trying to excuse Judas himself."

At this moment the clock struck, and the Asistenta cried out, "Two o'clock, upon my word!"

"I declare to goodness," said Maria, who had heard her mistress's impatient ejaculation as she entered the room, "I really thought some misfortune had occurred. Señora, the convent is not next door, and there is a great deal of ground to get over, before going there and returning."

"Daughter of my heart!" exclaimed the Asistenta, on seeing Elia behind Maria, and forgetting, like all impatient people, her indisposition, when the cause ceased. Elia

hastened to throw herself into the arms opened to receive her.

Elia was of middle stature, and perfectly formed. Her face was fair, and her complexion brilliant; and her fine black eyes, if they had not been so full and perfect, and so mild in expression, would have appeared disproportioned to her delicate features; but her chief attraction was the combination of vivacity and modesty, of animation and kindness, of grace and simplicity, displayed in all she said and did. She wore a jacket of black cloth, with wide hanging sleeves, and a petticoat of the same material, thickly plaited round her waist. On her throat was a white handkerchief of plaited muslin, fastened under the chin with a long silver pin. She had leather shoes with silver buckles, and her hair parted straight from the front to the back, formed two plaits, so long that they fell over her shoulders and almost touched the ground.

"My darling child," said the Asistenta, on seeing that Elia was weeping, "why are you weeping? are you reluctant to come here? do you not love your mother?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Señora," said

Maria, "the good nuns by their farewells and lamentations have agitated her; but to believe that she is not too delighted to come—nonsense!"

"Do you wish to return to the convent?" asked the Asistenta.

"No, Señora," replied Elia; "I hope never, never to leave you again: but you will let me go sometimes to see my good friends, won't you?"

"Whenever you wish it, or have a fancy to do so, my angel!" said the Asistenta. "But I can't bear to see you cry—I hate the sight of tears, as you know; if I can dry them I always do so, and if not, they vex me sadly; and I can't bear to cry myself, for I instantly get a dreadful headache. So come here!" she added, straining the girl to her heart; "I promise you that here, all those you shed shall be dried up."

The door at this moment opened, and the Condesa, Fernando, Carlos, and Don Narciso entered.

Elia turned towards them, and they were all much struck by her beauty. Clara repeatedly embraced Elia, saying, while looking at her from head to foot,

"My dear child, you must be as lovely as Venus, to be even good looking in such a disguise! Do the pupils in the convent dress in this queer fashion? what an atrocity! Elia, do you recognise me? do you remember me?"

"Yes!" replied she, instantly. "Clara, I know that you are now Condesa de Palma, and I remember the pretty doll you gave me before you went away, and some white mice too, but unluckily they all died."

"Elia, do you remember me, too?" said Carlos.

"Carlos!" exclaimed she, and a sweet smile lighted up her charming features, tears still glittering on her eyelashes; "do you suppose that your uniform and great moustaches change you so much that I am not to know you again? Your present costume is much more becoming than your school boy cloak, that you used to amuse yourself by tearing into shreds."

"And me, too, Elia?" asked Fernando.

The colour rushed to the cheeks of the young girl, and she said gravely, "Yes, Señor; in a convent nothing is forgotten, nothing ever changes."

"And do you really think," exclaimed Carlos, "that sentiments of friendship are so quickly forgotten in the world? No, no; if you only knew how often I thought of you in the heat of action, when balls were falling thick round me! I said to myself, this is not so pleasant as when Elia and I used to roast acorns and chesnuts together: and still more at splendid entertainments, when I saw a brilliant galaxy of beauty, I said, Elia is worth them all!"

"This is very daring gallantry to risk with my little nun," said Clara; "pause in your high flown phrases till you see her properly dressed. Aunt," said she, turning to the Asistentá, "I am going to run away with Elia, and when your evening's Tertulia assembles, I will bring her with me, dressed according to the fashion, for really at this moment she is a perfect caricature, and not fit to be seen by anybody."

"Clara, my dear, we can arrange this to-morrow," answered the Asistentá.

"No, no; this very day," replied Clara; "she is quite unpresentable—in fact, positively ridiculous. Don't grudge me this



pleasure, aunt, I am sure there are few enough in this antediluvian Seville."

"Leave me, for this day, with my mother," said Elia; "I have so much to say to her, and so many messages to give her from the nuns; and also a quantity of sweetmeats, which they made themselves, for my aunt." So saying, she took out a number of packages from a basket, containing sweetmeats beautifully decorated, adding, "These are made by the nuns." On seeing them, Señor Delgado smiled sardonically.

"Nuns!" said he; "egotistical beings, or weak victims, who through caprice, asperity, or idleness, withdraw from society, fancying themselves, within their four walls, elevated above the human race; envious, malicious, gossiping, and grumbling, and anxious to offer to God hearts that have never been sought by man."

Elia, displeased by this rude attack, instinctively shrank from the cynic and pressed closer to her mother's side, who exclaimed,

"Señor, from what source have you drawn such an amount of censure? you speak of convents as the blind man does

of colours; shall I give you my experiences of what I daily see there? Matrons, eighty years of age, with the souls of children, uniting the dignity of mature years with the innocence of youth; and lovely girls of twenty, disdaining the value attached to these advantages in society. I daily witness a serenity of soul unknown in the world, and lives passing away in gentleness, purity, and silence, like those silken gossamer threads which float in the air between heaven and earth. Those very nuns, whom you venture to calumniate, live a happy life, and look on death merely as a transition to a more blessed state."

"Aunt," said Clara, to efface the unpleasant impression made on the Asistentia by the speech of her *protégé*, the philosopher, "I must really run off with Elia; we are nearly the same height, so my maid can alter one of my dresses for her, and arrange her hair properly, and to-night, when you see the metamorphosis I have effected, you will thank me."

Saying this, she caught hold of Elia's hand, and ran out of the room, dragging her along with her, and in a few minutes

the wheels of her departing carriage were heard.

"It is impossible to refuse anything to that coaxing creature, Clara," said the Asistenta; "no wonder that her husband, Juan Maria, can never say no to her, as the selfwilled creature declares."

They had all been much pleased with Elia; Carlos, on his return home, could talk of nothing else. Fernando said nothing, in order not to augment his mother's disapproval of Elia leaving the convent.

At night the Tertulia took place. The Marquesa and the Asistenta were playing at cards, and round the large silver brasier some ladies were assembled. One of them, the Baronesa de San Bruno, said,

"I hear that girl, Elia, is here now: what can the Asistenta mean by allowing this foundling to leave her convent?"

"I think the reason is plain enough," said Doña Marianita, an old maid of quality, a poor relation of the Orreas, an excellent creature, without pretensions or ill nature, and grateful to the family who maintained her; "the Asistenta wishes to have her always with her, and also to

afford her full liberty to choose between the world and her convent. In this respect, as well as in every other, she has acted towards her like a mother."

"Do you call it acting like a mother," answered the Baronesa, "to educate a foundling like a young lady, to take her out of her proper sphere, to fill her with pride, to distract her thoughts from monastic life, to marry her, at last, to some shop keeper—as I suppose she must?"

"I see no reason for such a thing," said Doña Marianita; "she is good, pretty, well educated, and rich, because the Asistentita will give her a marriage portion."

"Do you really suppose," said the Baronesa, "because she may have money, that any one will think of marrying her? I don't say any gentleman of degree, but even any respectable man?"

"Who knows?" observed the Generala Rios, "perhaps her ancestors may have been well born. Has anything ever been discovered on this point, Marianita?"

"Not a syllable," answered she; "the most inviolable silence has, hitherto, been observed on the subject. At the time of the dreadful plague, the Asistentita went to

the country, and on her return she brought Elia with her. I know no more. Maria, who nursed the child, and adores her, is as close as wax—Pedro, the steward, as silent as a padlock—Juan, the coachman, a dumb fish—Don Benigno, a mute—and Isabel herself, who looks so demure, told me, one day when I asked her, that the girl was a daughter of the Grand Turk's, and on seeing my amazement, she added, 'Marianita, those who ask questions often hear lies!'

"Certainly," rejoined the Baronesa, "the Asistentá, who was always a precious sieve, has only held her tongue once in her life, but effectually on that occasion."

"Perhaps," said the Generala, "her birth coinciding with that disastrous epidemic, the girl may have lost her parents at that time, and been confided by them to the Asistentá."

"It is very possible," answered Doña Marianita; "because she told the girl that she was a daughter of a friend of hers, who died when she was born."

"In that case, why such mystery?" said the Baronesa in a peevish tone.

"Indeed it is very incomprehensible," said Marianita; "but no doubt our admi-

rable Isabel has her reasons, and they are sure to be good ones."

"Undeceive yourself, my dear," answered the Baronesa; "nothing that is good is made such a mystery of."

At this instant, the Condesa entered, leading Elia, who was dressed in white crape and rose coloured ribbons, and a wreath of roses in her hair. It was scarcely possible to imagine a more lovely apparition. Without heeding any one else she ran up to the Asistenta, and with a radiant smile of childish pleasure said,

"Look, mother, how gaily I am dressed!"

"You look like an angel, darling!" said the Asistenta, gazing at her with delight.

All present united in praising and admiring her.

"She has crowned herself with roses," said Don Narciso Delgado, "to celebrate her emancipation from the slavery of the convent—very natural!"

Elia looked startled and surprised, and then, taking off the garland which a moment before had caused her such pleasure, she said "If anyone can imagine that I could really put it on from such a motive, I no longer wish to wear it."

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the Condesa de Palma had finished the arrangements of her house, by modernizing it—assisted on this occasion by the elegant taste of Don Narciso—she resolved to give a splendid banquet, not only to surprise her friends and relations, but to entertain some strangers, who had brought letters of introduction to her from her husband. The Marquesa could not appear, being indisposed, and Elia, who was alarmed at the idea of a formal party, begged to be permitted to pass that day at the convent.

At ten o'clock the same night, the Marquesa and her daughter Esperanza were sitting together beside a superb brazier of brass and mahogany, when they heard a

carriage driving rapidly along, and stop at their door.

"Who can it be, at this hour?" said Esperanza, surprised.

"Can it be your aunt?" replied her mother.

"I never heard her old mules go along at such a pace," said Esperanza smiling.

The door of the room was thrown open with considerable noise, and the Asistentia entered hurriedly, followed by her constant shadow, Don Benigno, whose face was quite pallid and discomposed.

"Sister!" "My aunt!" exclaimed the Marquesa and her daughter.

But the Asistentia, without taking any notice of them, threw herself down on a sofa, and casting off her mantilla, she began to fan herself with such violence, that she broke her fan. All they could hear was her quick breathing and broken exclamations, such as "Santa Maria..... such doings.....the devil himself could do no worse.....it's no affair of mine," &c.

"Why, Isabel, you seem annoyed," said the Marquesa; "what is the matter?—what has happened?"

"First of all, Inés," said the Asistentia,



“order me some chocolate; I have been terribly worried, and my digestion entirely ruined! Such a dinner I never beheld—and that I, with more than threescore years of experience, should be expected to conform to such customs, because they are the fashion in London and Paris! Oh, dear!—oh, dear!—it is rather too much. *Esperanza*,” said she, as the young lady was leaving the room to order chocolate, “don’t forget that Don Benigno takes an ounce and a half.”

When the servants came to take away the silver tray with chocolate, and the fillagree baskets of biscuits and pastry, the *Asistenta*, in some degree restored, gave the following description to her sister-in-law:—

“I could not have slept, sister, if I had not seen you, to unbosom myself, and to tell you of all the new fangled alterations my precious niece has made in her house. My dear, you must see it to believe it. Blessed Virgin! what a spirit of destruction and revolution! It seems to me that the world is seized with a perpetual brain fever, attended by constant delirium—innovation, innovation!—this seems the grand point.

How heartily I do abhor these innovating gentlemen, beginning with the Señores of the Cortes, and ending with that ridiculous puppy Don Narciso, who pokes his sharp nose into every one's affairs.

"But to return to the point. I went to Clara's house at two o'clock. Imagine my distress, when on entering the courtyard I saw that the fountain, with its basin of gold fish, had been removed, and the fine statue of an armed knight, and the splendid cut boxwood shrubs, which were the admiration of all Seville; and all the bricks and tiles, which were so beautifully inlaid in the pavement of the court, torn up. The ground has been all dug up, and planted with weeping willows. 'What is the matter?' said Clara, coolly.—'How could you venture,' said I, 'to meddle with that antique statue, which seemed to form an integral part of the mansion?'—'My dear aunt,' replied she, 'people of taste considered it badly sculptured, and disproportionately large; it was only suitable to be placed at the end of an avenue of trees, to form a perspective. Is it not much more pleasant to hear the water falling into these alabaster basins?'—'But,' said I, 'what was

your objection to the boxwood shrubs?—were they also considered too large? Boxwood, the type of nobility among plants, which are not found growing uncultivated in the fields, nor in the grounds of any ordinary mansion—and so fragrant; that never scatter their dry leaves on the soil, the seasons passing them by and leaving them untouched, as if they had no time to visit them; grave, stern shrubs, which only form their boles after having lived centuries with families who venerate them, and who, while gazing at them, feel inclined to ask tidings of their ancestors, and to entreat their protection for their descendants.’—‘Aunt,’ replied Clara, ‘they were planted in vases of blue and white delft as old as the hills, very coarse, and in bad taste. Moreover, I by no means admire plants that are tyrannized over by being forced into various shapes, which deprives them of all grace.’ What could I say, Inés, in reply to such senseless objections?

“But to proceed. Could you believe that the large anteroom has been divested of the magnificent collection of family portraits, only equalled in fame in all Andalusia by the collection of the Marquesses de

Moscoso? Clara told me that she had transported them to a gallery in her husband's suite of apartments, giving an infinity of absurd reasons for this. She has painted the walls sea green, and hung up a number of portraits of illustrious men, as she called them, in mahogany frames. I examined them with curiosity: Inés, there was not a single Spaniard among them! At the head of them, instead of the great cardinal, uncle of her great great grandfather, was the portrait of an ugly old man, with a face like an ill conditioned goat. On seeing me looking at it with surprise, my *bête noire*, Don Narciso, said to me, 'This capital engraving is a likeness of the incomparable Voltaire.'—' *Voltaire!*' exclaimed I; 'that wicked man, whose works are prohibited, and whose principles are condemned from the very pulpit? indeed, señor, I can truly say that his face is as repulsive as his writings—niece, a fine exchange you have made certainly!'

"I went to the drawing room, which is equally transfigured; the ancient damask has been dismantled, all the chairs carried away, and nothing but plain mahogany chairs, without arms, in their place. The

valuable entailed pictures have been removed into the library, and engravings have replaced them that I was positively ashamed to look at. There was a goddess, as they called her, and a shepherd beside her, who really made me blush. 'Is it possible, Clara,' said I, 'that you can expose to view such monstrous improprieties? why, this woman has scarcely any clothes!'— 'Artistic beauty elevates the soul far above such earthly scruples,' said Don Narciso, sententiously.—'Señor,' said I, 'you may call this artistic beauty, because you don't possess it; but in this part of the world we call bread, bread, and wine, wine, and a woman without proper covering we consider a very improper personage. Clara, Clara! if the Inquisition still existed, these engravings would soon be burnt!'—'The Inquisition!' exclaimed Don Narciso, starting back; 'the very word, Señora, burns the mouth that utters it, and the ears that hear it.'—'Señor,' replied I, 'if your conscience were as pure as mine, neither the word, nor the thing itself, would alarm you so much.'

"Clara offered to go with me to the garden, saying she hoped that I should

approve more of the alterations she had made there. It was my sincere wish to praise them, for I knew that she was mortified at seeing that all she had done was so repugnant to my feelings; but, sister, it was impossible! She has pulled down the rock work beside the fountain—the negro riding on a crocodile, with a silver pineapple in his hand, has, I believe, gone to rejoin his swarthy brothers in Guinea—the tortoises, and lizards, and snakes, interspersed so skilfully among the shells, have disappeared, and no longer bask in the sun; the yews that stood at the entrance, trained and cut in the shape of the arms of the family, this beautiful work of so many long years—those shrubs which appeared to have grown in honour of the family—have been rooted up without mercy. There are now no longer delicate, sweet smelling flowers in the borders, which are replaced by common trees and shrubs. The gravel walks are destroyed, and narrow, twisting, crooked grass paths, twist round the garden, like naughty children. When it rains, we must go there in a carriage, I suppose, or else wear thick leather shoes, like men!

What devastation, Inés! It rent my heart to see it—did it not, Don Benigno?"

Don Benigno made no reply.

"Marvellous!" exclaimed the Asistenta, indignantly; "I don't believe a four and twenty pounder would disturb the composure of that worthy man."

"Señora," replied Don Benigno, "it is not my place to censure what your niece does."

"You speak very properly, as you always do," said the Marquesa.

"He does no such thing," answered the Asistenta, vehemently. "Every one has a perfect right to give their opinion, and my family is not a bit sacred either to him, or to any other person; but I must go on with my strange narration. It was now nearly three o'clock. 'Pray, when do we dine, Clara?' said I.—'About five o'clock,' said she.—'San Antonio!' exclaimed I, 'at five? why, I am faint from hunger now; and what is to become of my siesta?' Clara desired her servant to bring me a bowl of soup, and then went to dress. My dear, I do assure you, that soup of the French cook's was first cousin to the famous chicken

broth; but I laid down, to see if I could, at all events, take a nap before dinner.

“ At five o'clock Clara came to fetch me, and we entered the saloon together. Among the strangers was a gentleman dressed in black, a Frenchman, whom Don Narciso overwhelmed with civilities. ‘ I will bet ten to one,’ whispered I, to Clara, ‘ that these gentlemen are abusing Spain.’ — ‘ Aunt,’ said she, ‘ opinions are free. Nothing can be more absurd intolerance than to pretend that everything in this country is the best, and I cannot permit the slightest remark dictated by a different spirit.’ The Capitan-General offered me his hand at this moment, to conduct me to the dining room, which prevented me answering Clara, but I said to the Capitan, ‘ We derive no benefit, Señor, from your admitting so many foreigners into our country; it would be time enough to grant them passports when they can appreciate us, and do us justice, when we can look on them as good friends, and not as models to follow; and this day will arrive (though I may not live to see it), and probably sooner than you think, for no vertigo lasts long; but I beg you will tell me who the French gentleman is,



who seems so hand and glove with Don Narciso.' My dear, he told me he was a famous violinist, who intended to give a concert in the theatre! 'What!' said I, indignantly; 'you are jesting. Is the man to go from here to the boards of a theatre? I won't go to hear him, for I am sure he will either play the Marseillaise, or some equally dreadful tune.'

"But I must now tell you about the dinner. Sister, there was no *Olla*!<sup>1</sup> 'Clara,' said I, for she was seated opposite me, 'your cook has forgotten the olla.'—'No, aunt,' said Clara, smiling, 'I never have it on my table.' At this moment Don Narciso turned to the violin player, and said, 'A *rococo* country, my dear friend, very *rococo* indeed. Since the olla was first invented by some Spaniard, they cannot eat anything else.'

"I pretended not to hear him, but I felt a great inclination to repeat to him the proverb about birds and their nests. There were quantities of dishes, but all dressed with Flemish lard, which is always fatal to my digestion. The second course then arrived; but imagine my feelings, when,

<sup>1</sup> A dish made of boiled meat and vegetables.

instead of ham and turkey, I saw them put on the table—what do you think?—a haunch of venison! ‘Clara,’ said I, ‘why, venison is only eat by poor people!’—‘Señora,’ said she, ‘all kinds of game, but more especially venison, are considered the greatest delicacies in London and Paris.’—‘Probably,’ answered I, ‘from the simple reason, that there the venison is of better quality than in this country, where it is generally either tough or tainted.’ The partridges were anything but fresh; however, Don Narciso tried to persuade me that this was a great merit—so do me the favour henceforth, Inés, to remember that the chief perfection of game consists in being tainted. ‘But, Clara,’ said I, ‘when is the roast turkey coming?’—‘A very unrefined dish, aunt,’ said she, ‘and quite out of date.’ A turkey out of date!—I was dumb, sister. When both tastes and ideas are thus turned upside down, to avoid all disputes, silence is the only resource, and in order not to leave your guests without food, I should recommend not inviting them. There was a pie—where did it come from, Don Benigno?”

“From Strasburg,” replied he; “but I think they brought it from Paris, Señora.”

"It was worth the trouble!" continued she; "how rich, how insipid, how cloying! The dessert was vastly shabby. None of our rich cakes and sweetmeats—only some biscuits and fruit, and trash of that kind. 'Where are the cakes, and the candied fruits and comfits,' said I to Clara.—'Aunt,' she answered, 'I don't like Spanish dried fruits.'—'And pray why?' said I.—'Because,' said Don Narciso impertinently, 'all your fruits taste exactly alike, they are such a mass of sugar.'—'May I ask, Señor,' said I, 'would you like them better if they tasted of salt?' In short, not to exhaust your patience, Inés, when in the evening the servants brought in trays with cups on them, and I hoped to refresh myself by some chocolate, I was informed they were cups of tea. 'Many thanks,' said I to Clara, who offered me one, 'I never drink such a decoction unless I am indisposed.' I rose and came away; but it is late, and Juan will catch cold on the coach box, and I am going to swallow some soothing syrup, for the dinner put me in such a bad humour. I have now, however, discovered the new tastes of our modern regenerators. In order to have a fashionable table, the game must be tainted,

the dried fruits have no sugar, a haunch of venison must have the place of honour, and the turkey must be banished, as out of date!—a turkey out of date, my dear! my dear!” the Asistenta was heard muttering indignantly, while going down stairs.

## CHAPTER VII.

"You seem to be creating as many flowers as spring," said Maria one day, on entering Elia's apartment, and finding her seated at a table covered with artificial flowers.

"I am not only making flowers," replied Elia, "but verses."

"Verses!" exclaimed Maria surprised; "who taught you to make them?"

"Nobody," answered Elia. "I made them in imitation of those in honour of the Triságio. I counted the feet, I imitated the rhymes, and I think I have not succeeded so badly. I was so anxious to make them."

"And what are these verses?" said Maria.

"They are for my mother's *fête* day. I made this basket for her too," said she, showing her a silver wire basket; "I mean

to fill it with flowers, to offer it to her along with my verses."

"Right, my child, quite right," said Maria, caressing her fondly; "I like that. But I must go away for fear of disturbing you, and besides, I have a great deal to do myself."

Before leaving the room, however, she examined each of the flowers with the greatest complacency, and said, "Elia, I do really think the garden may well be jealous of you; the sun itself does not bring forth lovelier blossoms. How disappointed the bees would be, if you chose to play them a trick."

On the following morning, the *fête* day of the good Asistentá, all the joyous inhabitants of the house rose with happy faces; all hearts eager to welcome their lady. Don Benigno, first of all, presented her with a huge cake the size of a salver, adorned with flowers in proportion to its dimensions; among them was a glaring, full blown rose, which bore on its leaves, as a trophy of its charms, a pasteboard butterfly with two grains of shot for eyes, attached with gum on its solid surface; but his simple though sincere felicitations were of more value

than the splendid cake. All the farm servants on the property flocked to the house bringing their gifts, consisting of chickens, rabbits, fruit cakes made with oil, and fried pastry. The Señora accepted all these with the most amiable condescension. The delicacy of her heart was too great, either to feel or to show a haughty indifference, as the rich too often do, through pride, and also the thought of being obliged to give some compensation in return, when the poor strain every nerve to present them with gifts, which are, in fact, superfluous to their benefactors. The wish and purpose of these good people, was to please and gratify their mistress, and complete success crowned their endeavours.

Her relations next arrived, bringing rich presents of gold and silver, a writing desk, a rosary, a box for bon bons; the Condesa's gift was a beautiful breakfast service of china, and she requested Don Narciso to read aloud the verses he had composed for the occasion.

The Señor therefore commenced a long monotonous ode, which the Asistenta listened to with visible reluctance, Carlos yawning, but the Condesa accompanying

the lines by repeated gestures of admiration. He finished at last, as everything has an end in this world, which is the true and infallible law of compensation.

"But where is Elia?" asked Carlos, who wished to see her.

"I don't know," answered the Asistenta; "I missed her also. Call her, Carlos."

But at this moment the door opened, and Elia, as radiant as the sun, her soul in her eyes, and her heart in her smile, precipitately entered the room, carrying a silver fillagree basket filled with flowers. Maria followed, swelling with pride. At the sight, however, of so many persons, and of the splendid presents displayed on the table, Elia stopped short.

"My child, why don't you approach?" said the Asistenta; "is that a present for me?"

Elia still did not move.

"Go forwards," said Maria to her; "why should you hesitate to present your gift. Is it because you see so many splendid ones? My child, each gives according to his means, and your toil, and the nights you have passed without sleep, make the value of your gift quite equal to that of more expensive offerings."



"Maria is right," rejoined the Asistenta; "and what I appreciate in your's, as well as in all, is the good will, the desire you show to gratify and please me."

"Now, my child," said Maria, giving her privately a push, "you see that the Señora attaches full value to your present, though it may not be intrinsically valuable."

Elia went up to the Asistenta, and presented her basket in embarrassed silence.

"This won't do at all," said Maria; "present it as you intended, repeating the lines you wrote. They cannot fail to be good, as you took the verses in the holy Triságio for your model."

"Verses!" exclaimed all. The Condesa smiled, and Don Narciso gave one of his odious cynical sneers.

"Maria," said Elia, in a reproachful tone to her nurse, "this was a secret between us. See how justly ridiculous you have made me appear."

"The proverb is true enough," said Don Benigno, with some warmth, privately to Maria, "a discreet enemy is better than a foolish friend. What is the good of bringing to light the rhymes of the poor girl, in order that they may laugh at them?"

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed the Asistentá, answering Elia's speech; "certainly not, my dear child, what springs from the heart never can be so."

"Do you hear, Don *Wiseacre*?" said Maria in her turn, aside to Don Benigno.

"Come, child, repeat the verses," continued the Asistentá; "no one here will either print them or steal them from you, and the only space they have to cross is from your heart to mine, so they are not far apart. Quick," added she, seeing that Elia still hesitated, "you will cause me great pleasure."

"What more do you want, tiresome child?" whispered Maria to Elia.

Elia approaching the Asistentá, repeated the lines she had composed in a tremulous voice, and casting down her eyes glittering with tears.

The verses were pious, simple, and ingenuous, like the fair and guileless young creature, whose love for her adopted mother had induced her to write them, and concluded by praying that, in return for all her mother's goodness, God would shower down blessings on her, as she did the flowers in her basket. So saying, she

emptied the basket in the Asistentá's lap. Her kind friend embraced her tenderly, and covering her forehead with kisses, she said, while tears trickled down her cheeks.

"They are as tender and sweet as yourself. I knew they would be so."

"And now, pray," exclaimed Maria, turning triumphantly to Benigno, "what do you think of the foolish friend?" and looking at Narciso, she added, "can you deny now, Señor, that good verses may be made with the Triságio as a model."

"Oh! yes," said Narciso; "it is a pity that Boileau should have forgotten this new method, in his *Art Poétique*."

"And can verses only be made in the fashion of your Señor *Bolo*?" said Maria.

"Talk about pastry and washing, good woman," replied Don Narciso with pomposity, "and don't gabble about poetry."

"Much you know about it yourself," muttered Maria; "great stupid oaf!"

The impressions caused by this scene were various. The Marquesa buried in silence her disapprobation, so richly deserved in her opinion, by the exaggerated praises, the tender caresses, and flattery, and other foolish demonstrations lavished

on a simple, modest girl, who even with all these good qualities, was thus exposed to lose the repose and happiness of her whole life.

Fernando, entirely sympathising with his aunt's feelings, began to perceive with serious uneasiness, the lively impression already made by this fascinating girl, on the passionate character of his brother.

The Condesa, on the contrary, was so enthusiastic about Elia's lines, that she said they resembled a bunch of fresh wild flowers, and begged Don Narciso to correct them, and write them out in her album; but the Señor declined, pretending that the flowers would wither in passing through his hands.

"He is not far wrong either," whispered Carlos to Elia, "for your verses though not on so grand a scale, are worth far more than his ode; for its Alexandrines seem to have taken for model, not the Triságio, but the long, dry, shrivelled author himself."

The person, however, who was entirely entranced, drooping his head humbly before the triumphant Maria, was Don Benigno. To have written verses—this feat, to his plain but feeble understanding, was indeed

equivalent to the exploits of Columbus. He had been on thorns on seeing that his dear and simple young friend, instigated by Maria, whom he considered always so brazen faced, had got into such a hornet's nest; but scarcely did he hear the approbation the lines met with from the Asistentá, whose opinion was everything to this devoted creature, who always identified himself with his mistress, than delight and admiration filled his heart; and as his modesty and respect never permitted him to mingle in the general conversation, he resolved to disburden his heart on the following morning, by going to the convent, to mention what had occurred to the abbess, and to all the community.

"But in the midst of all this, Elia," said the Asistentá, "you have not breakfasted, so go, my child, and take some of the many cakes, and various kinds of pastry, in the dining room, for not only is it late, but you fasted yesterday."

"Fasted?" said Señor Narciso Delgado, with his usual acrimonious smile. "I neither knew that it was a fast day, or that you had attained the age of observing it."

"I have not," replied Elia, "but I do so both from piety, and from preference."

"Is it any pleasure to you to feel faint from hunger?" rejoined Narciso; "and do you really consider starving yourself an act of piety?"

"Yes, Señor, I do!" said Elia.

"In what does it consist, Señorita?" said Narciso with philosophical irony; "will you explain it to me?"

"It consists in making a sacrifice," said Elia quietly.

"If it were to benefit the object for whom we make it, then I could understand you; but what possible advantage can accrue to the Almighty from this sacrifice?"

"None; like everything else we do to His praise and glory. But the Divine Majesty admits good intentions, and receives the sacrifice of our hearts, for it is all we have to offer."

"Do you think it nothing," exclaimed Maria, "to place a curb on our appetites, to oppose temperance to gluttony, and to imitate the examples of so many just men and holy saints, from time immemorial?"

But Señor Delgado, without deigning to reply to Maria, said to Elia "Believe me

Señorita, in order to be acceptable to God, it is not necessary that we should deprive ourselves of the benefits the Supreme Being has bestowed on us, for the very purpose of our enjoying them. Let us be moral, virtuous, stretch out a succouring hand to miserable humanity, and bend the knee before our Great Creator.....”

“Señor Delgado,” said the Asistenta, “let me tell you fasting is an ordinance of the Church, and its sole merit consists in submission to a command; in the humility that obeys, in the deference that respects the Church, and in that abnegation which completes the command, thus showing public respect for the ordinances of our Mother Church. Your words are most anti-Catholic, and you seem to forget that you are in a Catholic country, and in a Catholic house, and that your sentiments cannot fail to wound all our feelings; and, as they especially offend me, I take the liberty of reminding you of these facts.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE Asistenta had only waited till her *fête* day was passed, to proceed to one of her country houses, where she was always pleased to go. The air of the country being pronounced very beneficial to the Condesa, who liked varying the scene, she willingly agreed to accompany her aunt. Fernando and Carlos also gladly accepted the invitation. Elia was wild with delight at the idea of going to the country, which she called a great garden, in the same way that she called her convent a small city.

They set forth on one of those charming days that winter creates, in order to put spring to the blush. They followed the direction of a small adjoining village, in the vicinity of which the Asistenta had some property, and some farms. The



Señora travelled in a very ancient coach, drawn by four strong mules; the Methusalites, as Carlos called them, were spared such hard work, and left behind to enjoy a holiday. Pedro mounted on one of the coach boxes, and the bailiff on the other, both armed with muskets.

The Condesa preceded them in her light *calèche*, drawn by two Norman horses with docked tails, that she had brought from abroad. Fernando and Carlos were mounted on two superb horses, presented to them by their aunt—the handsomest animals in her stud: the young men both wore the light, country costume of Andalusia.

They were received in the house belonging to the Señora, by the priest and the farm labourers.

The house was large and straggling, badly laid out, with very little furniture, and that chiefly the refuse of the Asis-tenta's house in Seville. With its spacious size, its ample *façade* of stone and iron, and its large portico, surmounted by the arms of the family, it formed a striking contrast to those country houses without foundations, of plaster of Paris, and with green blinds, which look as if they might be

placed on a Japan tray, as a pretty toy, which the English and their imitators call cottages, and which do not last even so long as the lives of their possessors. The Condesa would have given half a dozen such country houses as that of her aunt, for one cottage. The Asistenta would have been suffocated in such a place, and would certainly have thought it a cage.

A number of children, of all ages, crowded round the carriages, staring in great delight, with open mouths and eyes at the party, but especially at the Condesa's *calèche*. A murmur was soon heard, at first very gently whispered, but increasing by degrees till all voices united in a perfect chorus, gradually ascending to a noisy crescendo, "Horses without tails! horses without tails!"

On hearing this explosion of surprise and amazement, the Condesa and Carlos went into perfect fits of laughter; but not so Don Narciso Delgado, who, raising his whip in a rage, and menacing the uproarious crowd of boys, exclaimed "Be silent, you young scoundrels, and treat the horses of your betters with proper respect."

The boys scampered off, dispersing like

a flock of sparrows, but with the same degree of audacity as these, they returned to the charge, and encouraged by the laughter of the Condesa and Carlos, they began to shout to Don Narciso, who chanced to wear a light gray cap that day, "Look at his paper fool's cap! Merry andrew! merry andrew!"

Señor Narciso, seeing that the affray was taking an ugly turn, retreated in a rage, and left the house by a back door to go to the fields, muttering "Hottentots! barbarians! a pretty set to rule over!"

But this nick name stuck to him ever afterwards in the village, and the elegant and distinguished guest of the saloons of London and Paris was never known by any other name than that of the *Merry andrew*! Well may the proverb say, that no man is a prophet in his own country.

The days passed away gaily and uniformly, in expeditions to the various farms in the neighbourhood, in carriages and on mules. The evenings were sometimes rather long: on one of these, when the wind had risen so high as to threaten a storm, they had all assembled early. Clara reposing on a sofa of painted fir, modestly

covered with white cotton, was resting her pretty head on one of the cushions.

"The hours when you are bored and tired, should not count in a person's existence," said she to Fernando, who was seated on an opposite sofa, reading, by the light of a lamp, some old parchments he had received from Seville. "Because, really Fernando, to be bored and to grow old at the same time, is as bad as to eat honey with sweet pastry."

"And why are you bored, Clara?" said her cousin.

"Vene Dios!" answered Clara, "as they say in those old fashioned comedies in our brilliant collection. What a question to ask in these mountains! What! you—the *fleur des pois* of the saloons of Paris—actually ask me, with the gravity of a Turk, why I feel bored in this drowsy Seville, which delights in its immovability like an Indian Brahmin, and is as pleased as an owl with its obscurity."

"At the risk of appearing an obscure Sevillian in your eyes, I must tell you, Clara, that I have been sometimes bored in town, but never here."

"Chacun à son gout!" said Clara.

"Rely on it, I am not likely to suffer from *ennui* by your side, cousin."

"I hear, Fernando; but although I do like you very sincerely, I really cannot return you that last compliment."

Carlos began to stir the fire, on which Clara said to him,

"How badly you do it! what smoke! We shall all smell like smoked Catalonian sausages! Of the three qualities indispensable to excel in poking a fire—to be a poet, a lover, or a fool—you, at all events, possess the last."

"And the other two are lying dormant, *in petto*," answered Carlos; "but it is not my fault that the chimney smokes, it is owing to its abominable construction."

Maria, who was never deficient in some excuse for coming into the room to gossip, entered at this moment, saying,

"San Francisco! what a horrid smell the English oil has!" This was a moderator lamp, which the Condesa had brought from London and presented to her aunt, and which, placed on one side of the fire place, cast its full light on an English newspaper that Narciso was reading, with his back to the light. These moderator

lamps were just beginning to be introduced, to the desperation of all the indigenous Spanish Pedros and Marias, who could not accomplish the management of their complicated mechanism; and Maria was in so far right, that the badly trimmed lamp emitted a most offensive stench on this damp, foggy evening.

"Oh, Condesa!" exclaimed Don Narciso suddenly, with such vehemence that his exclamation caused the Asistenta, who was seated in an arm chair, to start violently. Elia was beside her, on a low stool, making fine lace stockings.

"What's the matter?" asked the Asistenta.

"The most wonderful discovery," said Don Narciso, "has been made in that island, not of swans—as poets say—but of Titans, which is here fully described. They have applied the propelling force of steam to manufactures, with the most marvellous success!"

"What men! how clever they must be!" said the Condesa, carelessly; not taking the smallest interest in this grand discovery.

"What particular advantage, pray, is

likely to accrue from this, to cause you to be in such a state of excitement?" asked the Asistenta. "Come, let me hear about it; what is this famous new light?"

"Would to Heaven," said Maria, aside, "it were that of some lamp a little easier to manage!"

"Señora," replied the enthusiastic philosopher to the Asistenta, "it has, certainly, no connexion with us here; but it is an economy which permits, in a manufactory, the suppression of two hundred workmen. He who originated such a grand idea, and he who carried it out, deserve....."

"To be hanged!" said the Asistenta, interrupting the enthusiastic admirer of England.

The latter was about to dilate, in a long worded panygeric, on every class of moral and material progress, when a new current of air sent a cloud of smoke into the room. Don Narciso, who, being nearest, had the full benefit of it, first shut his eyes, then his mouth, sneezing tremendously again and again.

"No where, but in Spain," said he at last, "where people live like *lazzaroni*, can you find country houses so detestably built.

There is a degree of intense laziness here, a *sans souci* which far surpasses that of the Turks and Indians: this is not only being backward, it is a state of decay; we are actually retrograding. I should like to see Cadiz, which the Andalucians, with their usual bombast, compare to a silver cup—it will never be more than a coarse earthen Medina pan.”

“Good Heavens!” said the Condesa, who was on this occasion displeased with her Harpocrates for his rude speech; “I have heard you grumble in every part of the world! in London you were in despair, in Paris raging, you are discontented here, and you will be just as bad at Cadiz.”

“Don’t you know the story of the man who was always changing about, because there was a hobgoblin in his house,” said Carlos; “and, on one occasion, when he was accompanying a cart loaded with his furniture, which he was transporting elsewhere, he happened to look up, and there he saw, forming a pyramid on the top of his furniture, the hobgoblin?”

“So that he always took it with him?” said the Condesa, laughing.



"You have hit the mark exactly, cousin."

"You ought to remember, Condesa, in order to be just," said Don Narciso, "that I was in despair in London because its accursed climate so aggravated my rheumatic pains, that I was almost out of my senses; and that what made me so furious in Paris, the cradle and the temple of liberalism and philosophy (sacred torches of humanity), was witnessing the detestable hypocrisy that the Bourbons have brought into fashion, placing their bigotry like an extinguisher on the light of the age."

"And in what did it consist?" asked the Asistenta.

"Señora," replied Don Narciso, "it caused me horror and nausea. These worldly people, these sinners, followed processions and went to churches!"

"And they acted very properly in so doing," said the Asistenta; "let all come, let all flock to the Temple of God."

"Señora, some go there from hypocrisy."

"Let them go!"

"Others to amuse themselves."

"Still let them go."

"Others because German romance has brought mysticism into fashion, with its

cathedrals, and painted glass, and dim lights."

"Let them only go."

"Others to hear the music."

"Let them go."

"Some to laugh and criticize."

"Those are the only persons who ought not to go," said the Asistenta.

"And yet you would have every other class attend church?"

"Yes, I repeat it again; every one must be the better for bending the knee to God; a spark of true piety may, at such a moment, enlighten the hardest or most frivolous heart, and man may be more exacting perhaps than our merciful Creator. The good will triumph at last."

At this moment, Pedro entered, to say that supper was served.

While they were crossing the corridor, Carlos said to Elia, "And I, too, hope to triumph, Elia."

"Over your evil passions, Carlos? you will do well!"

"No; I cherish no passions but good ones, Elia; I wish to triumph over your convent, which is a Minotaur."

“ Oh, what a hard name! and pray what does it mean?”

“ The Minotaur was a monster, that devoured young girls by hundreds.”

“ I think your regiment deserves the name much more, where so many poor creatures are killed, but to say this of a convent is quite a—what is it Don Narciso calls it?—a paradox,” said she, laughing, and going into the supper room with Carlos.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE wind was driving along the clouds, which had been discharging their seas of soft water—but when the two days of rain had passed away, the country was as fresh and lovely as an Odalisque emerging from a perfumed bath.

An expedition was arranged for the following day to dine at one of the Asistenta's farms, about a league from the village. The Señora was in her own apartment, making all the necessary arrangements for the next day's amusement, with Pedro and Maria.

"How pleased you seem to be," said Elia, on seeing the satisfaction she showed.

"Yes, my child, I certainly am; for all are to enjoy a happy day to-morrow!"

“How good you are, mother,” exclaimed Elia.

“Señora, is a calf to be killed?” said Pedro.

“No; a sheep,” interposed Maria.

“A calf,” replied Pedro, “is more profitable; and you know the Señora wishes that every one present should have ample entertainment. We shall be a hundred, beside the crowd of chance comers, who are sure to present themselves without any invitation.”

“At the same time, you know,” replied Maria, tartly, “that it is my duty to prepare dinner for my mistress and her friends, and that mutton is much better and more tender than veal.....”

“Do not wrangle,” said the Asistenta; “kill both a sheep and a calf.”

“So the wrong-headedness of this woman,” growled Pedro, “is to cause needless expense!”

“Do you suppose the Señora will be either richer or poorer for a sheep more or less?” said Maria.

“A spendthrift’s maxim,” objected Pedro. “Drops of wax makes a Paschal candle at

last. How free you are, liberal Maria, with other people's goods!"

"You two are always disputing," observed the Asistentá, "always in extremes; you either are mighty fond of each other, or quarrelling violently."

"The latter case is most common," said Maria; "there can be no doubt that our guardian angels turn their backs on each other."

"Señora," said Pedro, "I am the flesh, and Maria is the thorn in it."

"You are right in saying that," observed Maria, "for the good cheer you enjoy has made you as fat as a pike; you are like a quilted mattress, and your face as round and large as that of the blessed sun itself."

"As for you," replied Pedro, "owing to the fretful temper that wastes you away, you are so skinny that you look like a pruned vine, and more saffron in complexion than the yellow parchments of ancient archives."

"What a pity you two did not marry," said the Asistentá; "and then you would have had the night to quarrel in as well as the day."

"With such a woman, Señora, there

would be no peace either by night or by day; and I would wager that instead of snoring, she would snarl all night long."

"I have been married once," said Maria; "but if I had never been married, I would rather have been a wretched old maid to the end of my life, than have had such a lump of unleavened dough by my side as Pedro."

"As for me," said Pedro, "I have also been married, and nothing would induce me ever to marry again, no, not even were it the Princess of Asturias; remembering this story....."

"Pedro, for Heaven's sake spare us one of your long stories!" exclaimed Maria.

"Tell us the story, Pedro, by all means," said the Asistentia; "it will amuse us."

"There were two dear friends," commenced Pedro, "who mutually agreed that the first who died should bring tidings to his friend of his fate in the other world. They both married, and the first who died fulfilled his promise and appeared to his friend. 'How do you fare?' asked he. 'Famously,' said the ghost. 'When I ascended to heaven I saw St. Peter. What has your life been?' said he.—'Señor,' I answered, 'I am a poor man

who married.....'—'Say no more,' said he; 'pass in, for you have had your purgatory already.'—The apparition then disappeared, leaving his friend quite satisfied and consoled. Shortly after, he lost his wife; and, in course of time, married again. When he died, he presented himself before St. Peter with a light heart. 'What has been your life?' asked the Saint.—'I have been married *twice*,' answered he, making a step forward, certain of being well received; but St. Peter pushed him back, saying, 'My friend, heaven is not meant for fools!' "

"Would you like a receipt from me, Pedro?" asked Maria, "I have heard you tell that story more than twenty times; moreover, it is as old as the hills."

The Asistenta laughed and said, "Maria, remember that Clara cannot bear spices of any kind."

"Very well, Señora, I will take care not to tell her there are any."

"Pedro," continued the Asistenta, "don't forget that my nieces are very partial to the cakes of *las Minimas*."

"They are all made already, Señora."

"Maria, remember that Elia likes your



orange pudding, that you make better than any one in the world."

"It is already written down in the bill of fare," said Maria.

"Be careful," continued the Señora, "that you have those Castilian peas, and Estremadura sausages, that Don Benigno likes so much."

"Certainly, Señora."

"Pedro, don't let it escape your bad memory, that Don Narciso Delgado drinks nothing but red wine."

"I do believe," exclaimed Maria, "that you would study what even the lepers like! let him drink vinegar, if he does not like the wine of the country! I am sure no beverage could possibly be as sour as his temper."

"Maria," said the Asistentia, rising to go away, "he is living in my house, so, of course, I must pay him every attention; don't be a goose all your life, good woman!"

"She thinks of everything, she remembers every creature," said Maria, on seeing her mistress leave the room, "except, indeed, herself. If you, Pedro, had not taken care to order the turkey, and I the sweetmeats made of eggs, she would have

been without her favourite dishes to-morrow."

"Maria," replied the Major Domo, "God made one mould for the Señora, and then broke it; there never was her equal and there never will be."

On the following morning, a number of donkeys arrived in the court of the mansion, and a crowd of little boys assembled at the gate, in the hope of seeing the horses without tails, and their favourite antipathy, Don Narciso, or the Merry andrew as they called him. No one, whether Narciso, or a minister, a member of the academy, or a great millionaire, or the very archetype of elegant life, can hope to escape the gibes, and jests, and nicknames of the reckless Andalusian lads. Even the great Alexander Dumas, who enjoyed his full share of these assaults, ingenuously owns with surprise, that the Spanish people have found means even to turn the French into ridicule; this witty nation, who invented the *vaudeville*, a style of drama which extends beyond the Pyrenees. Those who, instead of laughing like the Condesa and Carlos, are enraged by these jeers, like Don Narciso, are very silly.

But, on this occasion, the boys were not destined to enjoy the sight of this phenomenon; for the Condesa had sent for an elegant side saddle of red Cordova leather, stuffed with soft sheep skin, which, placed over a bright coloured cloth, and with the head piece all covered with ribbons, bells, and tassels, highly embellished the light and active donkey the Condesa was to ride. The animals destined for the other Señoras were more simply ornamented, and the ladies seated themselves comfortably; two strong crossed pommels like an X forming the side saddle.

“Ay! you brute!” said one of the donkey drivers, falling foul of his donkey, because the poor animal jibbed and winced from the heavy pannier of provisions, its back being sadly galled. “You pretend not to be able to carry your burden, which is as light as a nun’s heart!” So saying, he began beating the animal with that entire recklessness which Spaniards in general exhibit towards all animals, till the wretched donkey began to kick from pain.

“For Heaven’s sake, don’t belabour the unfortunate animal in this way!” said Elia, quite distressed.

"He does not understand any other language," said the man.

"It is barbarity," said the Asistenta, "to treat the animals so badly by whom you gain your bread."

"I suppose," replied the man, "if it had been born a bishop it would have showered down benedictions."

"But I don't choose that these poor donkeys should be so abominably maltreated," said the Asistenta, indignantly. "Give up your whip, if you must come with us, or go away altogether, which would be the shortest plan."

The man, without making any reply, began to unload the animal.

"Señora," said the bailiff, to the Asistenta, "because a rough muleteer gives a few heavy blows, would you cut off his right arm? This poor man has six children and a number of donkeys, and this day's work and provisions will be an actual god-send to him."

"Very well, he may come," replied the Señora; "but he is to have no whip."

"Miguel," said the bailiff, "finish your loading, the Señora says you may come."

"She is very obliging," replied Miguel.

"If this hamper is not taken till I take it, it will remain here till the day of judgment."

"Don't be a fool, Miguel, nor kick against the pricks," whispered the bailiff to him; "ten reals are not to be made light of, and meat and wine at discretion not to be despised."

"Nothing would induce me to go," answered Miguel, gruffly. "No one shall ever tell me to go away twice, so that's settled. I gain my bread honestly, or I submit to hunger cheerfully;" so saying, he mounted the donkey, and giving it some furious lashes, he quickly disappeared.

"Did you ever see such a proud rascal?" said the Asistentia; "I would willingly, if I dared, send some one to give him a dozen lashes as severe as those he has given that poor brute, he would then know what they meant—savage! barbarian! But," added she, "his poor wife and children must not suffer from his misconduct—poor things! Send them a douro, and don't let them know from whom it comes."

"The fellow is a genuine Andalucian," said Delgado, with his usual sneer; "as poor as Job, and as proud as Lucifer!"

"This is owing," said the Condesa, smiling, "to their never having read your beloved *Contrat Social*, nor having heard any harangues on the *dignity of man*."

"What would you have?" said the bailiff; "self respect and profit don't always lie in the same sack."

"There is no doubt," exclaimed the Condesa, enthusiastically, "that under their coarse garb they have the souls of princes. Frasco," said she, to the bailiff, "give Miguel half an ounce from me."

"Señora Condesa, I think this unwise," said the bailiff, with his good common sense.

But the Condesa, now mounted on her gallant donkey, was in fits of laughter, and had forgotten all about the recent occurrence.

"Delgado, Delgado!" exclaimed she, "what a brilliant figure I should make thus in Longchamp!"

The rest were carefully placed in their side saddles, each with an attendant by her side. The men were all on horseback, except Delgado and Benigno, who were such wretched riders, that they even preferred *stultified asinine locomotion*, as the former called it.

The day was charming—how few are not so in Andalusia! The vault of heaven seemed higher than ever, the atmosphere clearer, the sun more brilliant, the birds warbling more sweetly, and the fields smiling more brightly. The aloes were standing sternly erect in the valley, like soldiers under arms, guarding the property; at their feet, and under their shelter, were flourishing geraniums, and wild roses, and poppies, and corn flowers blooming in the fields, and the wild briar, protecting its children from too close contact by her array of thorns. Flowery thyme, which only springs from a barren soil, exhaled the sweet perfume which is extracted from it by art, as if to prove, that however dry, sterile, and unpleasant a thing may be, there is a mode of obtaining something profitable and agreeable from it.

These scenes of nature make a profound impression on those cultivated minds that have enlarged the limits of their sensations, and on those hearts that have suffered and enjoyed, and who indulge hopes and fears with equal vehemence. There are those, however, whose hearts have neither suffered nor enjoyed, for whom the past and the

present are equally peaceful and monotonous, like the watery path traversed by a vessel in calm sunshine, where the voyage to come is likely to be as tranquil as that which is passed—for those souls who have not, in refining their taste by foreign travel and by books, lost in natural grace, vigour, and a love of nature, what they may have gained in refinement and elegance, for such persons similar scenes please and cheer, but do not agitate the soul.

Fortunately for them, all the party, now gaily riding along gathering flowers, and inhaling fragrance on every side, were in one or other of the tranquil frames of mind we have described, and each followed his own impulse.

“Have you many children, José?” said the Asistentá, to her escort, who was a cousin of the bailiff’s, and very poor.

“Eight, Señora.”

“Pretty well!—and more coming, probably?”

“And more coming!” echoed the poor man, with an accent of resignation.

“And you love them all dearly?”

“Señora, each child that is born seems to bring love with it!”



“Are they all boys?”

“Five boys and three girls, Señora; the two eldest were drawn by the conscription, the third is employed on your farm with the donkeys, but Frasco says he is going to dismiss him, as he is not wanted; the two youngest are swineherds.”

“Come, José, your sons don’t seem to give you much trouble.”

“The saying is true enough, Señora, three girls and their mother make four demons for their father.”

“If I remember rightly, you proposed last year to cultivate a field which you rented from me?”

“Yes, Señora, and if I have not paid my rent, it is because.....”

“I am not thinking of that, my good man—far from it.”

“It all went wrong, and with a piece of ground that I planted in partnership with my cousin Frasco, there was no end to bad luck; the melons all shrivelled up, and only served to fatten a pig, and consequently it swelled up and died. With the profits I intended to have bought an ass, which would have been a great convenience to me, but when the accounts were made up, instead

of profits, there was a considerable deficiency, and so ended all my hopes."

"Bless me, you seem very unlucky! It proves the old saying, that Fortune does not favour those who seek her, but those who meet her by chance. But never mind, my good man, this year you and I will enter into partnership."

"May Heaven reward you, Señora! may you live in glory hereafter, and may each of your melons turn into a bag of ounces."

Don Benigno was behind his Señora, and with his usual paucity of words, he only occasionally said, watching his mistress, "José, take care of the trunk of that tree. José, this ground is slippery, be cautious. José, to the right; don't you see that hole? José, are you sure that the girths are sufficiently tightened?"

Elia preceded them, as glad and bright as the sun itself. She amused herself by filling her gown with flowers and plants, seeking them eagerly as she went along, and the donkey driver pulling them for her.

"Look," said she, to Carlos, who kept close to her side, "these plants are as fragrant as incense. This is sweet marjorum,

and this wild mint, and this thyme, all not only sweet, but useful and good."

"I make no doubt they are," answered Carlos, "but I far more admire that pretty scarlet rose that you wear in your hair, under your muslin hood, and which makes you lovelier even than usual. You look so charming to-day, and the country so charming also, that I cannot tell whether the country embellishes you, or you the country."

"This is a Jericho rose," said Elia, who accepted the eulogy of her rose, and quietly passed by the praise of herself; "do you know why its hue is so bright? There was a rose tree at the foot of the Cross, the roses of which were white, but a drop of the sacred blood fell on one of the roses, and changed them all into this brilliant red."

"What absurd legends these are," exclaimed Delgado, whose donkey being accustomed to stand in the same stable with that of Elia, had insensibly crept up to her side. "You had better found a school of mutual and gratuitous instruction; for your chronicles, etymology, and belief, seem to

me to consist chiefly in couplets, flowers, legends, and tales."

At this moment, the animal on which Señor Delgado was mounted, stumbled, and the rider being carelessly seated, and absorbed in the ardour of his discourse, lost his balance, and fell flat on the ground, sprawling like a frog. "How detestable these country excursions are," said Delgado, in a rage, rising and shaking the dust off his clothes, amid a universal titter; "they are worse than commonplace or primitive, they are vulgar!" so saying, he retreated sulkily to the rear, in very bad humour.

"Señor," said at length the man by his side, "have you seen the farms near this? There are none to be compared with that of Romeral. Three hundred acres within a ring fence! a new olive plantation, wonderfully productive, and without a single gap; a farmhouse as large as a convent, in short, the boundary is....."

"Do me the favour to hold your tongue," said Delgado, interrupting him suddenly. "Every rational man requires to devote some hours of the day to thought. I am engaged in this manner at present, and your talking plagues me. I never asked you any ques-

tions. What care I about the farms? they are not mine."

The poor peasant turned his eyes with envy on the escort of the good Asistentá, so rich and powerful, and who was yet questioning her escort so kindly about his children and his prospects.

"How quickly," said he, to himself, "can any one distinguish between those who are somebodies and those who are nobodies!"

Pedro and Maria closed the procession on donkeys, along with those that carried the provisions. Pedro was riding an animal that, from old age and hard work, was but a sorry object.

"So it seems you have forgotten the tooth-picks," Maria was saying; "your memory is just like a sieve."

"And your's is like a money box," replied the steward; "why did you not remind me of them?"

"They are not at all necessary," said Don Narciso Delgado, who having gone to the rear, found himself close beside them. They are never used in England—it is considered bad manners there, and very unrefined to use a toothpick—moreover, it is very detrimental to the enamel of the teeth."

"I would not care," muttered Maria, "if he had never returned from his England."

"Pedro," asked Don Narcisco, "have you brought some Valdepeñas wine? you know that except claret, it is the only wine I drink."

"Yes, Señor," answered Pedro, "it is here."

"Pedro has no want of memory where wine is concerned," grumbled Maria.

"Quite true," replied Pedro, who overheard her; "for you know the old saying, 'Water for wheat, wine for men, a stick for women.'"

"Clara," said Carlos, who had gone up to his cousin, making her a sign to look at the group forming the rearguard. "What a strange anomaly we behold at this moment! Don Quixote and Sancho having exchanged steeds."

## CHAPTER X.

THE party now penetrated into the olive plantation, and among the dark leaves of the olives were seen the walls of the farmhouse of Romeral newly whitewashed, for the purpose of welcoming gaily its mistress. In front of the door stood an enormous mulberry tree, a vegetable structure raised by the hand of time—a plough was leaning on its trunk, and on its branches were hanging a gun and a guitar—under its shade was seated a robust man of powerful and energetic aspect, well known for being able to make use of any one of these three objects, according to circumstances.

He started up quickly to meet the party, while his neatly dressed, cheerful looking wife, hurried to throw the gates wide open.

“Thank God, we see you again, Señora !”

said she, bringing a stool, to enable the Asistentá to dismount with greater ease; "how happy we feel! if we had a chime of bells, we would ring a joyful peal in honour of your visit. Are you quite well, Señora?"

"Like my contemporaries, Beatriz. I have lived many years, and have few yet to live; and you—how do you get on, and your mother, and children? has the one who broke his arm entirely recovered?" She said this while ascending the stairs, and entering a spacious room with only a few hard, uncomfortable chairs, a fir table, and no mats.

"Gracious! aunt," said the Condesa, "this looks like a plundered hospital."

"And, pray, how would you wish a farmhouse to be furnished, in which you pass only a couple of hours every two or three years?" said the Asistentá.

They refreshed themselves with orangeade and lemonade, and then missing Don Narciso, they went to the window, and saw him standing opposite a stone which he was attentively examining first with a lens, and then through his spectacles. In a few minutes he came in as quickly as his scraggy legs would permit.



"Señora!" exclaimed he, emphatically, "I have just discovered a treasure! a Roman tombstone, with its inscription. Señora, were you aware that you possessed so precious a jewel?"

"No," replied the Asistenta; "I don't care about it much. What interest can I feel in a stone placed on the grave of a Pagan?"

"How did it come into your possession?" asked Narciso, eagerly.

"How can I tell?" replied the Asistenta.

"We got it," said the farmer's wife, "out of a limekiln, and my husband brought it here as a lintel for the gate of the courtyard."

"Oh! imbecility!" exclaimed Don Narciso, full of antiquarian zeal; "oh! base ignorance! surely your husband must have seen the Latin inscription?"

"My husband cannot read," replied she; "not a single letter?"

At this moment Fernando and Carlos came back, having gone to examine the stone.

"It is certainly Roman," said Fernando; "the inscription is wanting because the

stone is mutilated, but the letters S. T. T. L. are distinctly visible."

"Do you hear that, Señora? those invaluable letters, S. T. T. L.," said Don Narciso.

"And pray what may they mean?" asked the Asistenta.

"They mean," answered Don Narciso, "*sid tibi terra levis*—may the earth be light on you."

"Then, Señor, let me tell you," answered the Asistenta, "that they say a very foolish thing."

"Señora!" exclaimed Don Narciso, "the learning of Rome, the sanction of ages, the admiration of the learned, all are included in the phrase that you stigmatize as folly; what an insult to this sublime motto!"

"And I repeat it," replied the Asistenta, "without being awed either by your learned words, or your pompous tone. Only compare them with the inscriptions on our graves, R. I. P. A.—rest in peace, amen; a solemn cry to God, for an immortal soul; but, *may the earth lie light!* this is a prayer addressed to the earth, to be as light as a rope dancer, and not to weigh too heavily on the bones and dust beneath, that are

likely to care much for that, truly! your invaluable S. T. T. L. are very pious words certainly. What do you think of this epitaph, Don Benigno?"

"I think, Señora," said Benigno, modestly, "that they would not apply to those who are buried in a vault."

"And you, my child, what do you think of these celebrated letters?"

"They do not awaken within me the thoughts that appear appropriate to death," replied Elia.

"May I ask, Señorita, in that case, what you would put on a tomb?" asked Don Narciso, with a derisive air. "I should like to know how you intend to excel the Romans?"

"I would write on a sepulchre, what our Mother Abbess often said in speaking of death, 'Humble yourself, if you wish to be exalted; lose, if you wish to gain; die, if you wish to live!'"

"Well said, my own darling!" exclaimed the Asistenta; "come here that I may embrace you."

"How true it is," said Carlos, "that the more we know, the less the feel."

"It is better to have knowledge than feeling," said Don Narciso.

"That I deny," said Carlos. "I would give up all my books for one deep sentiment."

After having refreshed themselves, they all went out to walk while dinner was preparing. Fernando offered his arm to his aunt.

"No, nephew," said she, "I am obliged to you, but leave me with Don Benigno, who is accustomed to my pace; besides, I wish to walk only a little way, so go along with the others, only I charge you to take care of Elia; if she runs about much, in this burning sun, she may catch a fever."

Don Benigno unfurled a huge coloured umbrella, which might have sheltered a dozen persons, to shade his Señora; the bailiff walked on her other side, clearing the path from every obstruction.

"Señora," said Don Benigno, "Frasco and I are of opinion, that there are some workpeople here, whose salaries might be altogether retrenched. The sheep have three shepherds; the head shepherd, one more, and a lad would be sufficient. No one is necessary to look after the asses, for

they are all employed in drawing carts at present, and during the harvest one guard is enough."

"True!" answered the Asistenta; "you speak sense, only you seem to have forgotten one thing."

"What is it?" asked both, eagerly.

"It is," said the Señora, "that though they are not necessary to me, I am certainly necessary to them, so let things remain as they are."

In the meantime, Elia was flitting about like a roe, examining the shrubs, and gathering flowers, so she soon lost sight of the others.

"See," said she to Carlos, who had followed her, showing him a dark purple campanula of a particular species, common in Andalucia, "look at this, it is called the old woman's lamp."

"I would rather look at the bright light of your eyes," answered Carlos.

"Carlos," said Elia, "for some time past, you have been in the habit of paying me compliments, and I do not like it—this is flattery; praise should only be uttered when people we wish to extol are not present. Would you like me to say to your face,

how agreeable you are, Carlos; what a good disposition you have, and how kind and amiable in everything; none of my mother's guests can be compared with you?—though I say all this when you are absent."

"Yes, certainly, I should like it exceedingly," said Carlos, much amused, and highly delighted. "Elia, it would make me very happy."

"I admire your vanity," replied Elia. "Does praise make you happy?"

"When uttered by your lips, it does."

"And why so?"

"Because I love you, Elia, love you dearly; and not as a brother does his sister, a mother her child, or a friend his friend, but as the heart loves life, without which it can no longer exist, and from which it cannot be torn asunder, without ceasing to beat."

A strange confusion overwhelmed Elia, on hearing such sweet but passionate words from Carlos; she cast down her eyes and started back, shrinking like the sensitive plant, at the first palpitation of her heart.

"You believe me, my Elia?" asked Carlos, with profound emotion.

Elia, reproaching herself with this first instinctive shrinking as a fault, and a want of gratitude, lifted her beautiful dark eyes, and fixing them on Carlos with the most captivating sweetness and ingenuousness, she said, "Yes, I believe you, Carlos! why should I not believe you?"

"But, Elia," continued Carlos, in a soft and tremulous voice, "do you love me as much as I love you?"

"I love you so truly, Carlos," answered the ingenuous Elia, "that if you were ordered to rejoin your regiment, I would return to the convent, for all would appear sad and gloomy without you."

"Then I solemnly swear to you," said Carlos earnestly, placing a gold ring on Elia's finger, "and I call to witness the angels, whom you resemble, that I will love you for ever and ever, that I will unite my fate to your's, and be your companion and protector through life, faithfully sharing with you the joys and sorrows of this world."

"You wish to be my husband, Carlos?"

"On the honour of a Spanish cavalier, I do."

"How happy this will make my mother."

"Not a word to her at present!" exclaimed Carlos, eagerly.

"And why, Carlos?"

"Because—because, Elia, because it is the part of the man to speak first, and above all, to his own parents."

"You are right, Carlos; I understand you. But let it be soon—it costs me such pain to conceal anything from my mother."

"It cannot be very soon, Elia; it is absolutely necessary to prepare my mother."

"Prepare her! and why, Carlos?"

"Because, you innocent child, mothers are not usually desirous that their sons should marry, especially if—if they are very young."

"What? mothers don't wish their sons to marry! I thought they would rejoice at it!—a secret—a secret....." continued she, sadly.

"Elia, does not such a love secret as ours, appear sweet in your eyes?"

"The love does, Carlos, but not the secrecy."

"Why, my Elia?"

"Because everything is brighter in the full light of the sun; a secret in a heart is like a stain on crystal, dimming its purity;



a secret is like an iron wire on the sucker of a rose, impeding its growth."

At this moment, Fernando, who had been seeking Elia according to his aunt's desire, suddenly emerged from the olives. Elia, with instinctive shyness, fled—Carlos, surprised, remained silent.

"Carlos, Carlos!" said Fernando, in a tone of bitter reproach, "your's is not the conduct of a true cavalier."

"What do you mean?" asked Carlos, angrily.

"That it is most reprehensible to practise your gallantries on the young girl adopted by our aunt, who is an angel in innocence, and a child in experience, and not remembering that this rose blooms on a branch, where the roses are for you but the thorns for her."

"You outrage me, Fernando, and undervalue Elia; as a proof of it I will repeat to you what I have just sworn to her, in the face of the sun which smiled approval on our vows. I mean to lead Elia to the altar, for she is both noble, and modest, confiding, lovely, and good; and she shall be mine by the most holy and indissoluble ties."

Fernando, on hearing these words, remained long silent. The invincible obstacles opposed to his brother's project, the discord and misery he foresaw, appalled him: at the same time, hearing Carlos express himself so nobly—for though thoughtless and impulsive as ever, still he was both upright and generous—disarmed him, and thus, approaching Carlos, he said, "Pardon me, brother, if I was unjust towards you; but you have not yet taken time to consider that what you propose is impossible, and that if you persist in carrying out your design, you will effect both your ruin and that of Elia."

"And why?"

"Because Elia, a *foundling*, neither will, nor can, nor ought, to become the wife of an Orrea!"

"Elia," rejoined Carlos, "is too great a novice in the world, to suspect that the want of high birth forms a barrier between two loving hearts: besides, you know, that by my aunt's desire, she believes herself to be the daughter of one of her friends—as for me, you are aware that I attach little value to such old fashioned prejudices."

"Prejudices!" said Fernando; "you

speak thus, on the authority of those vain and empty phrases, that tread into dust both time and experience. Do you not know that there are trees with such roots that, even though cut down, they sprout forth again with renewed vigour, because their sap lies deep in the bosom of their mother earth. Carlos, do not set society at defiance!"

"What care I for its opinions?"

"None ever yet placed themselves in opposition to the world," continued Fernando, "that it did not avenge itself on them; do not despise the judgments of men, for they can cruelly poison life."

"Do you think me a woman, to shrink from their judgments?" said Carlos.

"They are so interwoven with our very existence," replied Fernando, "that no one can withdraw from their influence. Fly! Carlos, follow the advice of a brother who loves you truly. By sacrificing passion to reason, you will ensure peace for life."

"Neither religion nor morality call on me to make such a sacrifice," cried Carlos.

"Carlos, remember that in acting thus, you will dig your mother's grave."

Carlos started and remained irresolute,

but, after a pause, he said, "No, Fernando, she is a just and good mother, and anxious for my happiness; she will be softened by degrees—she cannot fail to appreciate such a pure and lovely angel as Elia—why should pride and vanity stifle every other sentiment? And you, Fernando, who have hitherto been always my refuge and protector, will you not shield me and assist me still?" Saying these words, Carlos leant his head on his brother's shoulder, who replied,

"I will never fail you, Carlos; but I prefer snatching you away from a precipice, to dragging you out of an abyss."

## CHAPTER XI.

WHILE these scenes were passing, in which the agitation of various passions were threatening the future, just as the stirring and hurried pulsations of the blood announce a violent crisis in our organic system, an occurrence of a very different nature was taking place in another part of the olive plantation. The Asistentia was surrounded by a strange looking throng of beings, covered with rags, dishevelled, their faces bold and impudent, and shouting with discordant voices, "A prize! a prize!" The strange part of the affair was, that the Señora, instead of looking either shocked or indignant, as might have been expected, seemed quite amused, saying to the bailiff, who wished to insist on the mob dispersing,

"Let them alone, Frasco; it is their privilege."

"A prize! a prize!" shouted the rioters, again.

"Will you be silent?" said Frasco.

"Don't you hear what I say, obstinate creature?" said the Asistentia; "they won't carry me off. Good people," continued she, "I offer a kid as a ransom for my rescue."

"Good! good!" shouted the crowd; "but the secretary is also our prisoner."

Don Benigno hastened to take a douro out of his purse.

"Let it alone," said the Asistentia; "our redemption money is my affair. You scarecrows!" she added, laughing, "I offer a sheep for Don Benigno's rescue."

These words were followed by a tremendous explosion of delight. There were no *vivas*, but plenty of grateful phrases, such as, "May God reward you!"

"Señora," said Don Benigno, timidly, "I'm sure I am not worth a sheep."

"But I am worth more than a kid, so you need not be so particular; we can share the ransom between us," said the Señora; and turning to the crowd, she con-

tinued, "Good people, Frasco has my orders to pay for our liberty, so good bye!"

This legion of turbulent souls were olive gatherers; they were usually composed of women, and such men as were of little use in other labours, and of children of both sexes, at that detestable age, from ten to fourteen. They were the poorest of the villagers, and to complete their perfections as types of their species, and not to fail to recount them all, usually lying on the damp ground, and tearing their clothes in the brambles; they dressed, therefore, in any old rags they could manage to get. According to an ancient privilege, they had taken prisoner their Señora, which was an indirect, but established mode, of getting a handsome present from her.

When they all returned to the farm, dinner was served.

"Do you know, Delgado," said the Condesa, "I am so excessively hungry that I declare I could actually eat an old fashioned olla."

Elia and Carlos were still much agitated. The pure joy of Elia occasionally sought refuge in tender silence, while the past and

the future smiled happily on her, like the infant seated on his mother's lap, smiling at once on his mother and on his guardian angel.

Carlos, absorbed entirely in the present, was intoxicated with delight—Elia alone occupied his heart, his eyes, and his thoughts.

"What a happy day!" exclaimed he at last, giving vent in these words to the transports of his heart.

"A happy day, indeed!" repeated Elia, who had no idea whatever of the necessity and decorum of sometimes exercising dissimulation in society.

"Is there really such a thing as happiness?" said the misanthropical Delgado. "In what does it consist? where is true felicity? will you tell me this, Señorita, as you think fit to proclaim it?" The amiable Delgado addressed these words to Elia, whom, as the most inexperienced, gentle, and inoffensive of the party, he invariably attacked by his rude hostilities. Elia looked considerably embarrassed by this sudden appeal.

"Felicity," said the Asistenta, in whom Delgado always found an antagonist, sword



in hand, "consists in the *wish and the power* to do good."

"Señora," replied the philosopher, "this may be virtue, but not felicity."

"I think," said Elia, briefly, "that every duty performed brings its pleasures."

"Well said, Elia," whispered Carlos, aside to her; "and thus we shall complete the happiness of loving each other, by making a duty of this pleasure."

"Do you consider it then a pleasure," said Narciso to the Condesa, "for an artilleryman to place himself before the mouth of a cannon?"

"Your argument is neither just nor appropriate," said Clara, hastily; "there are in this world hard and exceptional duties, but even these cause a certain satisfaction, not in the act of accomplishing them, but in the feeling of having accomplished them; and you," said the Condesa, turning to Benigno, in order to avert the armed intervention she saw flashing from the Asistent's eyes, "what is your idea of happiness?"

"In not offending God," answered the excellent man, whom neither sarcasms nor impertinence ever disturbed.

"This," said the Asistentá, "is being profoundly religious."

"Why do they weary themselves," whispered Carlos, "in seeking felicity? it consists in fond and secret love, like ours."

"No, Carlos," answered Elia; "a secret partakes of the nature of a falsehood."

"Happiness," said Fernando, "is like a toy in the hands of a child, who, as soon as it possesses it, destroys it. God, therefore, has constituted ours in *hope*, which renews our enjoyments as fast as we annihilate them."

"You are mistaken, Fernando," said his aunt; "there are people who never are happy, but this consists in their own nature, and not in circumstances. Happiness is like a bright complexion—good, pure blood bestows it, and not art."

They all then mounted their steeds and went home.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE party had now returned from the country: Carlos with a violent passion in his heart, and resolved on vanquishing every obstacle in his path; Fernando with the most poignant disquietude, and an unavailing desire to check a torrent, which must prove so disastrous in its consequences; Clara anxious to promote the interests of the romantic passion, to which she was by no means blind; Don Narciso saying that no heart was more inflammable than that of a *dévôte*; Maria thinking that so it was, and so it must be. The Asistentia and Don Benigno alone returned without having observed anything remarkable, or entertaining the slightest suspicion, quite unconscious that the serene and transparent atmosphere in which they existed was laden with the electricity of stormy passions.

The Carnival was approaching: it was the last Thursday before Shrove Tuesday. The Condesa, always disposed to amuse herself, and never hesitating to take advantage of her privilege as a spoiled child, in the house of her aunt secretly arranged a *soirée*, as it is now called, or *sarao*, as it was formerly designated, in order, as she said, to rouse the somnolent Tertulia from its lethargy, as Buonaparte had the Spanish lion; not, however, as the patriotic song of the War of Independence says, "to fill the terror struck land with its menacing roars," but to inspire all Seville with admiration for its brilliancy and splendour, and causing acute envy in the ancient Alameda, and its immovable guests, Cæsar and Hercules.

With this object, the Condesa had invited promiscuously, in the name of her aunt, all the persons she met for several days previously. Thus she filled the rooms with such a multitude of exotic guests, that even the natural and amiable cordiality of the Asistentia could not prevent her being surprised at the successive appearance of so many persons foreign to her habitual circle; consequently, the astonished expression of

her face becoming more marked as she received each successive person, delighted Clara and Carlos who were watching her, being in all their glory and enjoying the scene.

In the mean time, the Maestrante, who was the Asistentá's partner at cards, said,

"Señora, you have revoked twice!"

"Can you be surprised, my dear friend," answered the Asistentá, "when my attention is every instant distracted by returning the bows of so many people? Don't you see that my house this evening, without my knowing why or wherefore, is converted into a fair? and I, like the King in his Court, am receiving people I know nothing about."

"Aunt," said Carlos, coming up to her with a young and distinguished looking cavalier, "my friend, Rioseco, wishes to be presented to you, as you are a connexion of his mother's."

"Don't say only a connexion, but a dear friend," replied the Asistentá; "a fact of which I am proud, as well as of the pleasure of seeing her son in my house."

"Aunt," said the Condesa, in her turn, "allow me to present to you the Señor

Condé de Polikteiski, a praiseworthy and unhappy son of Poland."

"Happy to see you, Señor," said the Asistenta, bowing to a redfaced, bearded gentleman. "Whose son, did she say?" said the Asistenta to her partner when the others had passed on.

"Of Poland, Señora, the most revolutionary country in Europe."

"I think the man's face is very like his mother's. What can Clara mean by bringing such a bold, redfaced man here?"

"As it is Maunday Thursday....." answered the Maestrante.

"But I don't choose to have people of that description in my house!" said the Asistenta, indignantly. "What will Inés say!"

"Game, Señora!"

"Fancy my losing the game in such a way!" exclaimed the Asistenta, angrily. "One ace, two kings, and manille! and all owing to that horrid wandering Jew, who comes here without rhyme or reason, and no doubt does his best to pervert all my young friends by his revolutionary maxims! What could make Clara ask him? What will Inés say?"

At this moment a noisy band of music burst forth, that Clara had introduced privately into an adjoining room.

"Do they think we are deaf?" exclaimed the Asistenta, holding her hands on her ears. "What is this? Heaven help me!"

"As it is Maunday Thursday....." said her partner.

"I am sick of the sound of Maunday Thursday," replied the Asistenta.

Clara, leading Elia by the hand, who was agreeably surprised by the sound of music, and accompanied by Carlos and some other young men, now came up to the Asistenta and surrounded her, coaxing and wheedling her and begging her to listen to them.

"What is the matter now?" said she.

"We are going to dance, aunt," said Clara; "we are going to amuse ourselves, and you too! so come along, aunt, come along!"

"They are insane!" said she, half angry and half pleased, on seeing herself surrounded by so many gay young people. "To arrange a ball! in my house! and without ever giving me the slightest notice! a pretty affair truly!"

"It is Maunday Thursday, aunt!"

"Don't talk to me of your Maunday Thursday! Am I to have no voice in my own house on that day? Ah! Clara, Clara, as you could not persuade me to wear your fashionable *perruque*, you bring contraband goods into my house. All this riot does not please me. Heavens! what will Inés say?"

"Come along, dear aunt," said Clara; "you have not seen all yet," and constraining the good lady almost by force to rise, the Condesa made her leave the card room, and accompany her to the large saloon.

In a moment, Clara mounted on a platform she had caused to be erected, holding in her hand a quantity of long coloured ribbons, their long ends floating some to the right, and some to the left. This spectacle was so gay and pretty, that a smile began to dawn on the Asistenta's face, and to disperse all remains of disapproval.

Clara made the ladies place themselves on one side, and the gentlemen on the other. She desired them all to catch the ends of the ribbons, which she still held fast, until they had each got hold of a ribbon, when she let them loose, and each



pair were united according as chance willed it. Those who were thus united by the ribbons, were to remain partners and companions for the evening.

"Aunt, catch hold of a ribbon!" said Clara, from her platform, and the old lady, though very reluctantly, could not resist the entreaties on every side, and consented.

"The sky blue!" whispered Clara to Carlos, having observed that Elia had chosen this colour. Carlos profited by her hint, and when Clara dropped the ribbons, he found himself united by this tie of celestial hue to her whom he loved. Carlos presented his hand to his cousin to assist her in descending from the platform. Clara began to laugh, being so much diverted by seeing the expression of her aunt's face on finding that, by some fatal casualty, she was united by her ribbon to the Pole.

The Señora's disgust was so great, that, placing the ribbon in Clara's hand, she said, "Take charge of this gentleman yourself, and say to the son of Poland, as you call him, that I neither dance nor talk French, and, therefore, I am to all intents and purposes, a useless partner—you will find no difficulty in replacing me, for you

pronounced the words, son of Poland, with as much pomposity as if you had said, the sons of Pelazo."

The Señora hurried away, passing out of a doorway through which the face of Maria was visible, who, more sour and crabbed than ever, was contemplating the unusual tumult.

"Maria," said the Asistenta to her, "call Pedro, and desire him to bestir himself, and to take round refreshments: pastry, biscuits, tarts, sweetmeats, dried fruits, and cakes; take care that everything is properly served—why don't you go, Maria? surely you cannot have heard what I said?"

"The Señora Condesa has provided all this already, so I think she might quite as well have given the entertainment in her own house," said Maria, crossly.

"What harm does it cause you its taking place here, cross patch? are we in the middle of Lent? don't you know that it is Maunday Thursday?" said the Señora.

"Prettily the matting will be destroyed!" grumbled Maria.

"Do go away!" said the Asistenta, impatiently, turning her back on Maria.

Maria went away grumbling, and met Don Benigno in the corridor; who, with a lighted taper in his hand, was about to retire to bed.

"Did you ever see such a mob?" said she to him; "not content with turning her own house topsy turvey, the Señora Condesa must do the same here."

"What does the Señora Asistenta say?" asked Don Benigno.

"She is as much pleased and satisfied," said Maria, bitterly, "as all the others!"

"Then it is also my opinion," answered Don Benigno, "that it is a very right festivity, and quite appropriate to Maunday Thursday."

"My dear creature!" said the Baronesa de San Bruno to the Asistenta; on seeing her pass, "what a mixture in your rooms! such a *charivari* I never heard!"

"True, Baronesa—but what can I do? I can't sift the people like wheat, or command them to be silent! This Clara is capable of causing a revolution in a convent."

"What a set of people!" continued the Baronesa; "that person conversing with Señor Delgado is a Professor who gives

lessons to my children; that puppy, who is giving his arm to Clara, is a petty landholder, son of a merchant who became an army contractor. I say nothing of that foreign looking, hairy creature who was dancing with your niece—what a countenance! Be cautious—prudence never does any harm—and tell Maria to look after the silver candlesticks.”

“As you exaggerate so much,” replied the Asistentá, “your complaints and lamentations rather tend to reconcile me to the party. The gentleman you speak of, is, I really do think, an extremely good looking young man.”

“Purchase your dessert from him,” said the Baronesa, contemptuously.

“No,” replied the Asistentá; “but if Clara opens a subscription in his favour, as she tells me she intends to do, I will contribute two onzas.”

“It is fortunate for you that you are so rich,” rejoined the Baronesa, with a sneer; “for you can enjoy the satisfaction of spending your money in order to cut short the advice of a friend.”

“If I do not give it from charity (and I may truly say I do), it is to cut short

malevolence, and to compensate for unjust sarcasms! do you understand, Baronesa?" Saying this, the Asistentita passed on to the table where her sister-in-law was playing.

"Inés," said she, "what do you think of all this?"

"All very delightful, no doubt, Isabel," answered she, "but I am going home, for my head aches."

"Do remain, Inés," entreated the Asistentita; "stay to please me, and do not take away Esperanza—remember this is Maunday Thursday—let the young people amuse themselves."

"Pardon me, sister—excuse me—but such a clatter is particularly disagreeable to me—besides, I do not choose my daughter to dance this evening, and this is a point on which I have quite made up my mind. My sons will stay, no doubt, so farewell!"

Elia had danced the first quadrille with Carlos, who aided by the Condesa, had previously shown Elia the nature of Spanish dancing. Riaseco had asked Elia to dance with him; he was a young lieutenant-colonel of militia, arrogant in manner, and not attempting to conceal the deep impres-

sion made on him by the beauty and sweet simplicity of Elia. He showed his preference in so marked a manner, that it was evident to every one, and of course most of all to Carlos, who, annoyed and anxious, was leaning on the door, watching with jealous and uneasy eyes the handsome couple, moving gracefully to the sounds of the music. When the dance was over, Elia took possession of the first vacant seat near the door. Carlos instead of approaching her, went into the anteroom—a heroic sacrifice to jealousy—but scarcely had Elia observed his absence, when Carlos returned, and seated himself beside her, but so silent and sulky that he appeared to Elia a totally different person, and for the second time her heart felt heavy—this time not like the sensitive plant, but rather like a flower in the first frost.

“Elia,” said Carlos at last, “do you know the signification of the ribbon that united us this evening?”

“Sky blue?” replied Elia. “Yes, purity.”

Carlos hesitated for a moment, as if Elia’s words were an answer to his secret thoughts, but after a pause, he added, “In

the language of the world, Elia, it signifies jealousy—do you know what that is?”

“Yes,” replied Elia, “it is the misery of being deceived in love; but you have nothing to cause such a feeling.”

“What appears *nothing* to the indifferent, is enormous to him who loves; what do I not suffer, when I see others striving to gain your affections, and that you listen to them, are amused by them, and forget me!”

“Do you believe that I could forget you?” said Elia.

“At all events, you were not thinking of me.”

“Yes, Carlos.”

“I do not believe it.”

“You see, Carlos, since you have persuaded me to be silent, you now believe me capable of falsehood.”

“But when I have seen you, since the music began, think of nothing but shining in the eyes of others, dancing and amusing yourself.”

“When the music began, Carlos, my heart sang sweet words, in an idiom that the lips cannot utter. It sounded your name alone.”

“But, Elia,” said Carlos, “if you saw me

dancing with another, and paying her devoted attention, would you not be jealous also?"

"No," answered Elia; "it never would occur to me, that you loved me less on that account. I never could believe you capable of deceiving me."

"But I," continued Carlos, "am jealous even of the very zephyrs in the garden, that neglect the roses to dwell on your sweet lips. But you are weeping?" said Carlos, after a pause, on seeing some bright drops fall on the flowers that Elia wore in her bosom. "Why do you weep?"

"I scarcely know why," answered Elia, gently; "but I little thought you would ever have spoken to me so harshly."

"Oh! forgive me, forgive me, darling Elia!" exclaimed Carlos, ashamed and repentant; "I have been hard, unjust, and cruel; but believe that the fault arose from excess of love. Forgive my not having realized, that the mortal who loves you, ought not to wish you to descend to his sphere, but ought rather to strive to elevate himself to your's."



### CHAPTER XIII.

CARLOS was too passionately in love, and Elia far too sincere, to be able long to conceal their mutual tenderness; thus no one was ignorant of their sentiments, except the Asistentia, for she was so devotedly fond of her adopted daughter, that no degree of attention bestowed on her seemed strange or suspicious in her eyes.

There were many discussions on the subject. The mothers were censured, Carlos criticised, and above all the presumptuous Elia condemned. Each individual pointed out with admirable acuteness the line of conduct that ought to be followed, and the proper means to be consecutively adopted; in short, each individual, according to custom—you who read this, no doubt, and I who write it—was wise, prudent,

and sensible in arranging other people's affairs.

The Baronesa de San Bruno was particularly fond of dilating on this subject, who, as we have already seen, was one of those persons born with a soul bristling with prickles, like a hedgehog; hostile to every one from character, tone, and habit, using ill-natured criticisms as stilts to elevate themselves, without remembering that these very stilts expose their own deformities to view. These detestable beings placed in society like watch towers of envy, and telegraphs for scandal, seem to have received the odious mission, in opposition to that of the bee, that finds honey in every flower, to imbibe, on the contrary, venom from all things. Who can correct this capital defect of our epoch? what curb can be found to restrain the universal depreciation, attacking both men and things? Let us be religious and virtuous, for along with religion and virtue, their attendants, benevolence and Christian charity, enter our hearts.

The Baronesa, as we said, was passing her comments very freely on the Marquesa, declaring that she could not comprehend

her passive conduct—a Cordobesa de la Cepa—as ludicrously arrogant as one of her relations, who on hearing a bell toll for the death of a Queen of Spain, that never tolled except for one of the family of Cepa, inquired with affected gravity, “Our bell ringing? I suppose the Queen must have been a Cepa.”

This lady bore a grudge against the Marquesa on the following account:—The lineage of the Baronesa was grafted on a stem which was rather immature, but being very wealthy her house was splendid, combining with the best taste of those centuries when the arts flourished most, more luxuries and comforts than in the mansion of the Orreas, which existed not only anterior to the Conquest, and the subsequent distribution of property, but when it came into the hands of an Orrea, was already a very ancient building. It was large and straggling, and in a bad situation, for grandees in those old times isolated themselves, as if they feared not having sufficient space to extend their powerful arms; and they elevated their roofs, as if they dreaded not having sufficient height to raise their haughty heads erect.

The decayed state of the Marquesa's house having necessitated considerable repairs, on one occasion the Baronesa said that the Marquesa's mansion reminded her of a coarse cloak, originally badly made, and now patched and hung up in a garret. There was no lack of an officious tale-bearer, more swift than a carrier pigeon, and more rapid than a railroad, to repeat these remarks to the person whom they concerned, who without being at all discomposed, said that she was not at all surprised that the Baronesa who lived in such a pretty new house, should reason in this manner; that all the faults of her house consisted in its being so very ancient; a piece of ill fortune so far as houses were concerned, but a glorious circumstance when parchments and pedigrees were in question.

We never ascertained, to say the honest truth, whether, to the day of her death, the lady of the new house pardoned the lady of the old house for this squib.

Nevertheless, the Marquesa, in spite of her apparent indifference and negligence, was far from being tranquil; for though it appeared to her a very easy and simple

matter, to cut off by the roots at any moment, the *stupid fancy* of her son, as she called it, she dreaded her own impetuosity, which might betray her into manifesting a degree of displeasure and animosity prejudicial to Elia, whose good name was sacred in her eyes. She thought, however, that no more time should be lost, and she determined to speak to her son, and either to convince his reason, or to force him to rejoin his regiment. In the meantime, having determined her plans, she was tranquillised; for she thought, and thought truly, that there was no amount of love that could resist reason, time, and absence combined.

Carlos, on his side, had resolved for some time past to confide his attachment to his mother, but he had delayed doing so from day to day, not having found a suitable opportunity to introduce the subject. He had not sought a mediator, because he knew that no one exercised the smallest influence over his mother in family affairs. His aunt alone might have intervened between the mother and son; but Carlos's feelings of delicacy would not permit him to involve his aunt in the affair.

One day, when breakfast was over, and the servants had left the room, the Marquesa suddenly addressed her son in a temperate but firm tone, thus:—"Carlos, although it is contrary to maternal dignity for mothers to interfere with the love intrigues of their children; although on this point, as well as on many others, I should wish to shut my eyes, still on the present occasion, it is impossible for me to do so. It is my duty to forestall, and to avoid the results of your foolish fancies, which with your thoughtless character, you neither think of, nor care about; on this ground, I find it necessary to point out to you, your future course of conduct, especially as your recent behaviour has been the cause of compromising a young girl."

On hearing this unexpected exordium, the two brothers and Esperanza were surprised and confounded.

Fernando, knowing his mother's character, and the passion and intentions of his brother, foresaw a violent scene, the result of which might be very different from what the Marquesa anticipated, so he said—

"Mother, we men understand each other

best among ourselves; if you will give me permission to make known your wishes to Carlos, a scene may thus be avoided, which cannot fail to be painful to both."

"No," replied the Marquesa; "the counsels of a mother are more emphatic when uttered by her own lips; her will derives its chief authority from being expressed by herself."

Esperanza gazed at her mother, pale and trembling, Fernando was much agitated and hung his head, Carlos thought of Elia, and though he felt considerable emotion, he tranquillised himself by saying, "*Now, or Never.*"

The Marquesa attributed the visible emotion of her children, to the surprise caused by discovering that she was aware of Carlos's love, and believing that on this very account she could the more easily and promptly fulfil her design, she continued calmly—

"It is not my purpose, Carlos, to reproach you for having devoted your foolish attentions to a young lady, who ought to have been peculiarly sacred in your eyes, both as an orphan and an inmate of your aunt's house. Your reason, and your conscience,

will convince you of this quite as much as my words. Elia's character has been injured by your inconsiderate folly, and a pure reputation, Carlos, is the best dower a man can receive with the woman he marries, the best reward she can offer to her parents for their care, the most glorious inheritance that she can bequeath to her children; it is her crown in life, her epitaph on her tomb; a good name is like a rose, which a breath withers; we must therefore be careful to guard Elia from the breath of scandal, so fatal to a woman. There is only one mode of effecting this; it is easy, simple, and will attract no attention, and above all, it is my will and pleasure, Carlos; you must instantly leave this."

Silence reigned for a few minutes, while large tears dropped on Esperanza's clasped hands. At length, Carlos, in that tone of deference which his profound respect for his mother inspired, but with the decision arising from his vehement passion for Elia, said to his mother,

"Mother, if you exact it, I will depart; but do not imagine from this that I intend to renounce my pure love—it is my life, my soul, my fate, my very being. I love



an angel, whom God has placed on earth to see if men know how to appreciate her: she has accepted my vows, and nothing in the world can ever separate us."

The astonishment of his mother on hearing these words was so great, that she was silent for a moment, fixing her distended eyes in amazement on her son, while a mortal pallor overspread her features.

"What?" said she, at last, in a stifled voice; "what do you presume to utter in my presence?—that nothing in the world can prevent you persisting in your insane folly? Do my senses deceive me? Is it my son, the son of the man whom I love and venerate even in the grave, who expresses such a sentiment?"

"Yes, mother, it is your son, who is prepared to sacrifice everything for you except his love. Oh! mother do not condemn it! Why speak so harshly of a sentiment so pure, so noble, so invincible? Do not force me to disavow your authority! consent to our union—and receiving the companion of my life from your hand will make her doubly dear."

"And are you audacious enough to imagine," exclaimed the Marquesa, indignantly,

"that I shall promote your union with a—yes, let the veil now be rent away, that, like a cloud heavy with storms, has hitherto hidden the fatal secret of her birth! Know, then, that....."

"Mother," interrupted Carlos, eagerly, "what care I? would it make me happier, could I love her more ardently, if she were the daughter of a king? It matters not to me in what flowers the honey is found which is to sweeten my life. Are prejudices to decide my fate? Pride alone could desire anything further than such innocence, virtue, and beauty!"

"He must be mad," said the Marquesa, vehemently; "he will not listen to reason, nor to his mother—he is deaf to everything! Return to your senses, Carlos; speak like a rational being to your mother, and leave romance for less important emergencies."

"No, mother; if you are inexorable in your opposition, you shall find me equally so in my resolution; ask of me what is *possible*, and I will obey."

"Leave my sight, rebellious son!" exclaimed the Marquesa, trembling with all the indignation of her haughty and despotic

nature, on hearing these words of her son's; "the morrow's sun shall not shine on you in Seville. Do not presume to appear again before me until you have recovered your sane judgment, and your sense of duty, the consideration you owe to your family, and the respect due to your mother."

"I will go," said Carlos, starting up—"I will go, but not before I renew in your presence the vow that I made to Elia in the face of heaven, so that you may not trust in either time, absence, or even your authority, making me forget her. Elia, whom I love, and who loves me—Elia, in whom I place my trust, and who trusts me—Elia alone shall be my wife!"

The Marquesa rose, and stood erect, her features distorted, her face as pale as death, and stretching out her arm towards her son, there fell from her colourless and trembling lips these terrible words,

"Then take with you, as a marriage portion, unworthy son, the malediction of your mother!"

Esperanza uttered a faint scream, Fernando rushed up to his brother, who fell stunned into his arms.

The Marquesa left the room hurriedly;

Esperanza followed, wringing her hands and weeping.

"Mother, mother! where are you going?" said she, on seeing the Marquesa snatch up her mantilla.

"I am going," said the Marquesa, "to undeceive the bold girl who has dared to receive insensate vows, and to foment a mad passion. I shall quickly dissipate such insane illusions!"

"Mother," exclaimed Esperanza, throwing herself on her knees before her, "Elia is exceedingly unwell; let me go to her—allow a friend to open her eyes, if she persists in her delusion—but do not go yourself—do not—at least at this moment. I implore you not to go!"

"Leave me," replied the Marquesa, extricating herself from the clinging hands of her daughter; "do not let me find opposition to-day in all my children." Saying this, she left the room, and Esperanza, stupified with grief, remained on her knees, her arms extended towards the door through which the Marquesa had passed.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

ELIA, being indisposed, was lying on a sofa. Maria had just finished dressing her, and was now standing opposite, with a glass and a spoon in her hand, saying,

“Come, Elia, take this syrup of marsh mallows. I made it myself, and it is quite delicious.”

“I will take it, Maria,” answered Elia; “but although you did make it yourself, nothing can be more horrid.”

“How burning your skin is,” said Maria, feeling Elia’s pulse.

“You seem resolved to think that I am ill,” said Elia, “and all to make me swallow your beloved decoctions; but though I am flushed, I feel as well as possible, and as contented and merry as a cricket, for to-morrow, or next day, my secret will come

to light. And I tell you, nurse, beforehand, that when you hear it you will be so happy, that you won't sleep for three nights, nor grumble once for three whole days."

"I should think this secret," said Maria, smiling, "which has raised my curiosity so much, will, after all, be like the mountain and the mouse."

"On the contrary," replied Elia, eagerly, "but time will show."

The door of the apartment was suddenly thrown open, and the Marquesa, pale, stern, and imposing, appeared on the threshold. The spoon fell from Elia's hand, and Maria turned round in surprise.

"Maria, leave the room," said the Marquesa; "I wish to speak to Elia." Maria did not move, and cast a compassionate look of tenderness at the startled, agitated Elia. "Did you hear me?" said the Marquesa, drily, at the end of a minute.

Maria was obliged to withdraw in confusion, muttering as she went, "Is it possible? No, no, it cannot be! if it really be so, I hope her own tongue may choke her!"

When Maria closed the door, the Marquesa took a chair, and seated herself at a little distance, opposite Elia.

"Elia," said she, "there are things in this world to which we may shut our eyes, so long as by ignoring them no positive evil accrues; but when there is no other mode of avoiding mischief, it then becomes a duty to expose them. This is the case with regard to the secrecy hitherto observed about your birth, which I now consider it my positive duty to reveal to you." She paused a moment, and then proceeded: "In one of the journeys my sister and I made to the country, we stopped at a small inn by the wayside, seeing a priest whom we highly esteemed standing at the door. My sister-in-law asked him what motive induced him to come to Seville, as the ravages of that dreadful epidemic had already commenced there, which afterwards proved so disastrous. The priest begged us to come up stairs with him, and then related to us the following circumstances:

"Eight days since, I was awakened by a loud knocking at my door. I rose, and opened it. A stranger, whose face was hidden by a cloak in which he was muffled, told me my ministrations were required, and begged me to follow him. I hesitated a moment at the sight of this singular figure,

but at last said, 'Go on, and I will follow.' We went along the most dark and solitary streets in the place, till we reached its outskirts, where we found two horses tied to a tree. 'Where are you going?' asked I.—'Where your services are required,' was the answer.—I saw that I was about to involve myself as a participator, or victim, in some gloomy mystery; but I recommended my soul to God, and followed my guide. We had gone on for half an hour, when my conductor stopped before the door of an inclosed olive plantation. He opened it, and pursuing a narrow path, we at last arrived in an open space, where a bonfire was burning; around it were seated eight or ten men, whose calling it was not easy to mistake—they were evidently robbers. 'Father,' said one of them, addressing me—a fine looking man, who seemed the chief of the band, judging from his haughty air and tone of command—'confess this woman,' pointing, while he spoke, to a girl lying on the ground, wrapped in a cloak; he then retired, along with his companions. I thought they were about to assassinate her, and my blood curdled in my veins. I approached her, and seeing



that she lay motionless, I raised her head; the light of the fire fell full on her face, which was most lovely. 'Father,' said she, faintly, 'I feel that I am dying, but I wish to confess my innumerable sins; is there any hope for so great a sinner, who can only implore fervently the mercy of God?' I tranquillised the unfortunate woman as far as I could, but seeing that temporal aid was also indispensable for the wretched creature, whose groans and cries were truly heartrending, I sought out the Captain, and urged him to take her to my house, where my sister would do all in her power for her. He agreed thankfully, promising to return in a few days to fetch her, if she recovered. In the course of an hour she was laid in a bed in my house, where, after much suffering, she gave birth to a little girl, whose life cost her own. When he who had entrusted her to my care came to inquire for her, she was already lying in her coffin. He stood long contemplating in silent anguish the lovely features of the poor victim, rendered pale and serene by death, just as her soul had been calmed and purified in her dying moments by the Christian faith. I brought in the infant,

but on seeing it, the bandit broke out into a loud imprecation, accusing it as the cause of the death of the mother, and striking his forehead violently, he rushed out of the house."

"And abandoned his child?" exclaimed Elia, who had been eagerly listening to the Marquesa's narration, evidently not comprehending that these facts, of such distant date, had any connexion with the secret the Marquesa had announced with such solemnity that she was about to reveal. "Poor child—poor, forsaken creature!" murmured Elia, in a faint voice.

The Marquesa, without answering her, continued the priest's story. "I waited some days to see if the father would return to claim his infant, whom I had baptized by the same name as that of her mother, but as I have seen no more of him, I am forced to confide the orphan to the care of Providence, and to the charity of men, by conveying her to the Foundling Hospital in Seville. 'It is the purgatory of angels to expiate the sins of their fathers,' exclaimed Isabel, with her usual impetuosity. 'Bring the little creature here, father, I should like to see it.' It was brought in

sleeping, but when Isabel took it, the infant opened its eyes and seemed to fix them on her. Isabel, who always gives way to her first impulse, kissed it, and said, 'Father, this child shall be mine!' *You were that child!*" said the Marquesa, rising. "And now weigh well, whether the daughter of a robber and his victim can hope to form a union with the heir of the two most distinguished houses of Andalucia!"

Saying this, the Marquesa left the room, displaying a degree of outward composure contradicted by an involuntary trembling, and by the deadly paleness of her face.

Maria, who had gone away, on seeing the Marquesa leave the house, returned hurriedly to Elia's room. Her cries summoned all the inhabitants of the house, when, on her entrance, she found the girl she had nursed lying on the floor in a dead faint, as senseless as a corpse.

The Asistenta, supported by Don Benigno, came in as quickly as she could. "What is it?" she exclaimed, pushing aside the circle of servants round the inanimate Elia. "What has happened?"

"She is dying! she is dying!" cried

Maria, who had lost all command over herself.

"Elia! Elia! darling of my heart!" exclaimed the Asistenta. "A physician—a physician, instantly! Run! fly, all of you!"

Benigno hastened to open the window, Pedro to fetch vinegar.

"But, Maria, you have lost your senses," said the Asistenta: "speak—say what has caused this?"

"I do not know," answered Maria; "I was not in the room."

"Where were you then, careless creature, when I trusted in you to nurse her in an indisposition which I considered so trifling?"

"Señora," replied Maria, "the Señora Marquesa ordered me to leave the room."

"My sister has been here?" said the Asistenta, much surprized.

At this moment, Elia, who had been placed on a sofa, opened her eyes, but no sooner did she see the anxious face of the Asistenta than, rising by a sudden and irresistible impulse, she threw herself at her feet, and embracing her knees, exclaimed with deep emotion,

"Señora, Señora! I am not the daughter

of one of your friends, I am the wretched, deserted child of a bandit—of a father who forsook me! I am not worthy of the precious name of your daughter, Señora; I ought to have been your slave! I will retire to my proper position; I gladly renounce all your benefits, provided you leave me what I value so dearly—your love!.....” Her sobs prevented her saying more.

The Asistentá had sunk back in a chair, pale and trembling; the painful surprise depicted on her frank and expressive face, was quickly succeeded by the most violent indignation. “It is a perfect iniquity,” she murmured, “a vile treason! What! without a word to me? she must have the heart of a tigress! Rise, my child,” said she, straining Elia fondly to her heart, “this is your place, and ever shall be. You are my child, and those who refuse to consider you in this light I wish never to see again! I will avenge you, my darling! They wish to abase you, but I will exalt you; and I have the power to do so, my child, my child!”

But Elia did not answer, for she had

again fainted, and on her recovery showed symptoms of delirium.

"Señora," cried Maria, in an agony of grief, "they have murdered her! it is worse than a stab from a knife! she was ill already, and this shock has dug her grave! Heavenly powers! what had this innocent darling done—this rose without thorns?" and Maria cried bitterly.

"Maria, do not still further distress your mistress," said Don Benigno, whose eyes were fixed on the grieved and agonized countenance of the Asistentá.

"Console her yourself, if you can!" said Maria.

Pedro at this moment entered with the physician, who bled Elia, and desired that she should be carried to bed, promising to return in a couple of hours.

When he was gone, the Señora made a sign to Don Benigno to follow her to her room. "Fetch your writing materials," said she, in that clear voice, and with those brief words, natural to her when much excited.

Don Benigno was so confounded on hearing this command, anticipating what

would follow, that instead of the writing desk, he brought a candlestick.

"What are you dreaming about?" said the Asistenta angrily, rising and bringing the inkstand herself, with all the activity of a girl.

When all was prepared, the Asistenta said, "Write what I dictate. 'You have murdered my Elia.....'"

Don Benigno hesitated, while the pen trembled in his fingers as if from a current of air.

"Why do you not write?" asked the Señora.

"Because.....to whom is this letter addressed?" asked Don Benigno, in his turn, incapable of beginning a letter, without heading it with the name of the person for whom it was intended.

"I will tell you that presently," said the Asistenta, impatiently.

"'Elia,'" repeated Don Benigno, after having written the sentence.

"'You have committed an act of treachery towards me,'" continued the Asistenta, dictating; "'you have wounded me in the most susceptible spot of my heart; you have offended me irrevocably;

the cruelty of your conduct to *my child*'—underline those words, Don Benigno—is it done?"

"Yes, Señora," answered the secretary, in a melancholy voice.

The Señora proceeded, "'Your most offensive and incomprehensible conduct towards me, gives me good cause to declare that you and your children must henceforth renounce for ever all claim—you to my friendship, and they to my property.'"

Up to the word *friendship*, Don Benigno managed to write the words his mistress dictated, but when he came to the word *property*, the pen fell from his hands, and he implored the Señora, with a degree of courage he had never hitherto exhibited, to retract this harsh resolution; or at least to exempt him from the painful task of transcribing it—a task which, in fact, it was impossible for him to accomplish.

The Asistentita snatched the paper from his hands, made two great blots, wrote the word in question—*property*—in large, straggling characters, closed the letter, folded it the best way she could—and that was badly enough—stuck a huge square



red wafer on it, and, after directing it with her own hand, sent it off forthwith to the Marquesa's house, by a messenger.

Half an hour afterwards she received a small note, elegantly folded; its contents were these—

“The houses of Orrea and Córdoba have lived for centuries in opulence, and with honour, without requiring your wealth to enable them to do so. We therefore regard with indifference, being deprived of it, leaving the love of money to the inferior classes, and to base souls. I feel much more the loss of your friendship, which I know I have forfeited. I had recourse to a harsh step, but a necessary one; great evils require great remedies. But I do not wish, nor have the slightest intention, to justify myself, as I recognise no other judge to whom I am accountable, except my own conscience.

“INES DE CORDOBA.”

“How can Inés call it a great evil,” said the Asistentá, indignantly, after reading the letter, “that I love this child so dearly, and call her my daughter? But such she

shall be—no matter how others may lose by it!"

It is easy to deduce from this, that the Asistentia was a hundred miles removed from any suspicion of the sudden revolution in the drama, the effects of which were evident, but not the cause.

## CHAPTER XV.

WHEN the Marquesa quitted Esperanza, the latter, in great agitation, called her brother Fernando, relating to him, with many sobs, the resolution her mother had formed in her fit of passion, and entreated him to go for Father Salvador of the Capuchins, the Marquesa's confessor, the only person who was known to exercise any influence over this haughty soul, whose temper was like steel, and who was also peculiarly jealous of her maternal authority. This authority had always been respected by her children, from the judgment and austerity of the widow, her nobility and dignity of soul, the entire consecration of her life to the interests of her children, and also her many Christian virtues.

Fernando highly approved of his sister's

suggestion, and went to the convent himself, returning with Father Salvador. The aspect of this worthy man, in his coarse serge cassock and with his silvery beard, was so venerable, that it proved that neither gold nor silver are requisite for the dignity of man to shine forth in all its brightness.

When the Marquesa returned, Father Salvador already knew that on this family, hitherto so virtuous and tranquil, the weight of the maternal malediction had fallen. On seeing her confessor, the Marquesa was not only disagreeably surprised, but much displeased. She cast a reproachful glance on her daughter and Fernando, making them a sign to leave the room. When they were gone the Marquesa said, with considerable ascerbity, to the Capuchin, "You have been requested to come here, I conclude?"

"And if it were so?" asked the priest.

"I should consider it an extraordinary piece of insolence on the part of my children, to wish to impose a judge on my actions."

"I do not come as a judge, but as a mediator."

"Do you really imagine you can con-

vince me of the propriety of consenting to the monstrous marriage, which my son meditates?"

"You know, Señora, that I never interfere with the mundane affairs of your family; less worldly, and far more elevated, is the interest that brings me here. Gentleness and prudence effect more than rigour and intolerance, believe me."

"Is it a minister of religion," said the Marquesa with bitter irony, "whom I hear counselling lenity to evil passions?"

"Marquesa," said Father Salvador, "you have acted with violence and pride, although you had a right to condemn your son's projects, and to prohibit them. Your son will leave Seville, and you are not entitled to exact more at present; but you must retract your malediction, uttered in a moment of passion, and without reflection."

"I—I!" exclaimed the Marquesa, a flush of anger mounting to her pale cheeks. "I retract the next minute, what I had just uttered! I humiliate myself before my children! I yield to an insensate rebel! You must be jesting, father; but know that mutability is not one of the faults with which I can reproach myself."

"On this occasion it becomes a virtue, in which you may glory; I have frequently told you, Marquesa, that humility, this apparently small virtue, so despised by the world, which like the diamond without polish, neither shines nor makes any show, this virtue is, nevertheless, the surest guide to perfection."

"If humility exacts from a mother to abase herself before a son, who is insane, and persists in his insanity, then a good mother renounces this virtue. Preach this quality to the son, who requires it more than his mother."

"My functions then cease here; I cannot compromise my duty as your spiritual director; if your obstinacy prevents you from yielding, my conscience equally prevents my doing so."

Saying thus, he bowed, and slowly quitted the apartment, but just as his black dress was disappearing through the doorway, a faint voice was heard exclaiming, "Father Salvador, Father Salvador! return—I will obey you!" Religion had triumphed over passion in the woman's heart. The Marquesa's proud head drooped, and covering

her face with her hands, a torrent of tears fell from her eyes.

Father Salvador returned. "Daughter!" said he to the afflicted mother, deeply affected, "you have more merit in this sacrifice, than in a year of a perfect and ascetic life."

On the following day, Carlos absolved from his mother's malediction, departed, sacrificing his present prospects of felicity with violent grief, but firm in his hopes for the time to come.

## CHAPTER XVI.

A MONTH after the events we have described, profound silence reigned in the apartment of Elia, which a short time since had been the sanctuary of flowers, songs, and gaiety. The curtains were carefully drawn before the windows, in order to exclude all light; the perfume of the tube-rose and the jessamine, was replaced by the aromatic odours of lavender and thyme; ribbons and flowers were no longer scattered on the tables, now covered with syrups, decoctions, and prescriptions.

At the head of the bed was seated the Asistentá, and at the foot Don Benigno, who fixed his anxious eyes alternately on her who was lying on the bed, and on his Señora, whose pale and exhausted countenance bore ample testimony to her vigils



and cares. On the other side of the bed Maria was seated in a low chair, holding in her hand a stick on which was fastened a bunch of cut paper, to scare away any mosquitos or flies that might approach the place where poor Elia was lying immovable. The brilliant hues of youth and health had fled from her fair face; and at a distance the pale sleeping girl was scarcely distinguishable from the snowy white sheets which covered her, if her hair had not been visible on her pure forehead, descending in long rich tresses on both sides, appearing to a superstitious imagination like the black arms of death, on this fair and motionless head, clutching their prey. The group we have described, were watching Elia with eager interest.

"This is the longest and most tranquil sleep she has yet had," whispered the Asistentita.

"Certainly," replied Don Benigno, drawing forth his huge watch; "forty three minutes and a half."

The Asistentita presently said, as if these were the fruits of her previous meditations, "Carlos is gone, I hear, and never even came to take leave of me, nor of my Elia, to

whom he was always so kind and attentive, nor of you, Don Benigno, who were so patient to his faults. I never see any of the family now, but Fernando, and he makes very lame excuses for his brother's hurried departure. Inés is more hard than a rock, and more cruel than the King Don Pedro—after having by her barbarity reduced my child to the point of death, never to come to see her, not even to send a message to inquire after her! It is incredible; and yet you are always trying to make excuses for her, Don Benigno. You well deserve your name—you ought to have been baptized *Nathaniel*, for I do think, as Carlos used to say, you are capable of raising an altar to Herod."

At this moment they turned round, and saw Elia's sweet eyes open, and fixed with an indescribable expression of love and gratitude on the persons watching by her bedside.

Don Benigno started up and went to the window, to draw aside part of the curtain, to admit a ray of light, Maria busied herself in smoothing the cambric frills of the sheets, and the Asistentita taking the wrist

of the patient, counted its pulsations, tenderly kissing Elia's forehead.

"How can I ever," said Elia in a faint voice, "repay such benefits? One heart is not enough for such gratitude—a whole life could not suffice."

"Hush! darling," replied the Asistenta; "it is we who ought to be grateful that you have not died, and that you are now, we hope, recovering. And you deserve to get well, for you have been so docile, taking every medicine and decoction with your usual obedience. My child, if you had been taken from me, would there be any more sunshine in the house, any flowers in the garden, any consolation for me?"

A week later, poor Maria whose moral energy had vanquished her physical debility, perceived, when her mind was more at ease from Elia's gradual recovery, that she had herself overtaken her strength, which was so entirely exhausted, that she was forced to remain in bed.

Her room was situated in an *entresol*, beneath that of Elia, and, like her's, looking into the garden. Maria had risen to-day for the first time, having been several days in bed. She was seated at the window,

leaning her head on her hand, and buried in melancholy meditations; she was gazing at the blue sky, in which some lofty clouds were careering, as white and pure as everything is, so far removed from earth. The jessamines interlaced in the lattice work of the windows, were gently stirred by the evening breeze. The datura that dislikes light and heat, was pausing till the sun had fairly set, and the birds were silent and gone to roost, before exhaling its fragrance in the night air. The cypresses were rearing their stately heads, in whose sanctuary numbers of birds took refuge, nestling snugly on the branches of these verdant towers of Babel, and the bubbling of the crystal waters of the fountains was distinctly heard in the silence of evening.

"Well, Maria," said Pedro, entering the room, carrying a basin of broth, "how are you to-day? as usual, I suppose, worse and worse?"

"As you are always as healthy as an apple," replied Maria, "and your face like a January moon, what can you know about illness? look at me, and see if I don't bear the stamp of sickness on this cadaverous face of mine?"

“Indeed, you do; but why did you not take better care of yourself?” replied Pedro; “could not our young lady have been properly attended to, without almost killing yourself? was there no one else to nurse her, pray?”

“No one like me, Pedro.”

“The fancies of an invalid,” replied he; “elderly women always imagine in their mature wisdom that there is no one like them for certain things.”

“Nor is there, Pedro, where entire devotion and infinite love are required.”

“But, Maria, do we not all love the young lady as truly as our lives?”

“All of you may love her, but none so dearly as I do, who nursed her.”

At this instant a knock was heard at the door, and Pedro retreated; on Maria calling out to the person to come in, the house-keeper of the Marquesa entered. “You are welcome,” said Maria, wishing to rise to meet her visitor.

“Be quiet, be quiet!” said the latter, seizing Maria by the arm, and forcing her to sit down again; “the best of all compliments, is to make none at all. What has been the matter with you?”

"Ah! my good friend, I have passed nights of torture and days of groaning."

"This odious east wind, no doubt."

"No, the east wind and I are old friends, and always get on well together."

The housekeeper's visit was not, however, solely suggested as these inquiries may seem to indicate, by her anxiety about Maria's health. She had seen with regret, the disunion of the two families who had hitherto lived on such intimate and affectionate terms; she had noted the sudden journey of Carlos, and the illness of Elia, and the coincidence of these untoward events, without the slightest hint of the real cause having transpired, in this austere and reserved family; she therefore came to see if she could wheedle anything out of Maria, it being well known that her Señora concealed nothing from her. But to cajole Maria required a considerable amount of dexterity, as her discretion was as notorious as the trust reposed in her by her mistress. Thus, when the Marquesa's housekeeper, Catana, commenced the conversation, she started at the most distant point from the object that brought her.

"Maria," said she, "I came to ask you if you will tell me how you make your

famous orange pudding, because my Señora is constantly casting in my teeth that you make it far better than I do?"

Maria was immensely pleased and flattered by such a palpable triumph, and one so frankly avowed by her competitor. She smiled with more satisfaction than Apollo, when he triumphed over Marsyas; but infinitely more generous than the god, instead of flaying her rival, she answered, "The Marquesa pays me too high a compliment. It must be because 'The sun at home gives no heat,' as they say. We call this pudding the young lady's pudding, and I will tell you how I make it. To the juice of nine oranges, I put a pound of crushed white sugar, previously dissolved in the yokes of a dozen fresh eggs, and two heaped up spoonfuls of the very whitest and finest flour—a tin mould is prepared, well rubbed over with fresh butter, or Flemish lard, which melts when placed near the fire, till not a bit of lard can be perceived on the mould, otherwise the paste would become heavy. It is put in a *Bain Marie* pan, then cover the contents with a tin cover, and place it on red hot coals,

which you must renew if the heat dies away."

Catana thanked Maria gratefully for the minute receipt, and then said, "Have you heard anything new lately?"

"What am I likely to hear," answered Maria, "here between four walls, like a chicken in an egg shell. I never see a soul but Pedro, with whom I can carry on any conversation, and that is not likely to be worth much, for he is so impertinent as to say, that telling anything to a woman, is just the same as proclaiming it by the public crier."

"Do you know, my dear friend," said Catana, that the French cook of the Señora Condesa, who is as proud as a Spanish grandee, gave up his situation a few days ago, saying that there was no fat mutton here, that the Flemish lard is rancid, and the poultry starved. However, the Condesa having added ten, to the twenty douros of salary he already receives, he has condescended to remain."

"A fine prince of stewpans!" replied Maria, sharply; "my Señora says that she can't bear his sauces, and that he can't roast a turkey a bit!"



"But, Maria, now that no one overhears us, is it not a sad thing, and a real misfortune, that our Señoras, who have been all their lives hand and glove together, should have fallen out?"

Maria's physiognomy, which had been hitherto so open and placid—her recent triumph placing her on an height, whence she could look down on the disciple of Carême—suddenly changed its expression on hearing these words, resuming its usual vinegar aspect.

"The cause of this unhappy quarrel," continued Catana, "remains a mystery, even to the most ancient and faithful dependents of the family. I could wager that the Señora Asistentá has not been so reserved with you, and that you are pretty well acquainted with all that has occurred. It is really a most shameful thing, after being so many years in a family, to see oneself treated like a stranger, and not to know what to answer when asked questions."

Maria did not open her lips in a hurry. At last she replied, "If you wish, Catana, to know anything that concerns myself, I will open my heart frankly to you, as a

friend; but with regard to the affairs of my Señora, you must excuse me for being silent. I have many faults, but I am as true as gold, as faithful as a balance, and as trustworthy as a seal."

## CHAPTER XVII.

SOME time afterwards, in Elia's room, she and the Asistentá were seated at a table covered with gifts the Señora had bought for Elia, whose profound sadness was manifest even through all the efforts she made to conceal it. She looked lovelier than ever, for the first tears a woman sheds, although they may dim the frank and guileless face of the girl, light up her glance with the feeling and sentiment of the woman. They resemble the soft pedal, that melts into sweeter melody the sounds that spring from the heart; they form a transparent veil, which interposes between the woman and the eyes that gaze on her. The Asistentá, and Maria who was seated on a low stool, were discussing the subject of health.

"There is no doubt, Maria," said the Asistentá, "that if we continue to give Elia that everlasting chicken broth—Don Narciso's sovereign remedy—she will never get well."

"He says that this diet is to cease when the illness ceases to exist," said Don Benigno.

"And the patient, too," replied the Asistentá. "These doctors, with their new fashioned modes of curing maladies, are like the man who intending to kill a mosquito on his neighbour's forehead, gave him such a blow that he killed the man, too!"

"A pretty way, too," said Maria, "they spoke to me, who made the broth, complaining that next day it was in a jelly, instead of requiring to be put in ice to make it congeal, like that of the *Prince of Casseroles* of the Señora Condesa."

"Now that you are recovered, my child," said the Asistentá, "I do hope soon to see you as gay and joyous as you used to be before your illness, for I can discover no reason why you should give way to such low spirits. If I could only by any means discover some mode of making you more cheerful!—By the bye," continued she, turn-

ing to Don Benigno, "where is that letter that arrived for Elia during her illness, and which I desired you to keep for her? bring it now, so long as I remember it; perhaps it may assist in amusing the child."

A person must have been as ingenuous and free from guile as the Asistentá, not to perceive the embarrassment and emotion that her words caused in those who were listening to them; all three were silent.

"Have I been talking Greek?" said the Señora, in surprise, as Don Benigno did not move.

"The confusion at that time was so great," answered Maria, on seeing the bright crimson flush, and the expression of anxiety on Elia's face, "that very probably Don Benigno has mislaid or lost the letter."

"Don Benigno lose a letter!" exclaimed the Asistentá. "What an idea!—you to say such a thing! One would think you only knew him since yesterday. I am sure you have neither mislaid nor lost it, Don Benigno!"

"No, Señora, I have not," answered he, too honourable and truthful to help Maria in her stratagem.

"Then why don't you go and fetch it?" asked the Asistentá.

"Señora," answered Don Benigno, perplexed, "I fear it may be prejudicial to our dear young lady, to attempt to read a letter so confusedly written, that the address is scarcely legible."

"You can read it to her as you do mine," replied the Asistentá.

"But," interposed Maria, with a forced smile, intended to express playfulness, but degenerating in reality into a grimace, "the Señorita may have her little secrets, and not wish them to be discovered."

"Secrets!—from me, too!" exclaimed the Asistentá, looking at Elia with considerable surprise; and then, observing her vivid blush and her agitation, she continued, "well, let us say no more about the letter, as it contains secrets."

"No, I wish to have none from you!" exclaimed Elia; "it would weigh on my conscience like a crime, and on my heart as base ingratitude. Don Benigno," continued she, "you will oblige me by bringing me the letter."

Don Benigno did not stir, but looked as anxiously at Maria as the sailor does at the

direction of the wind. The latter pulled Elia's gown to attract her attention, whispering, "This is not the time to read it, Elia; wait till she goes away."

"Bring the letter, Don Benigno," said the Asistentá, gravely; "Elia is right in not concealing anything from her mother, and I should consider it very extraordinary, if any one were to try to dissuade her from such a course."

Don Benigno instantly obeyed, and returned with the letter, which he gave to Elia, and she, without opening it, placed it in her mother's hands.

"You know, then, from whom it comes?" asked the Asistentá.

"No," replied Elia; "but I suspect who wrote it."

The Asistentá opened the letter, put on her spectacles, and read what follows:

"Elia, a despotic will and tyrannical duty force me to depart, without even granting me the sad consolation of bidding you farewell—this cruel word, which precedes absence and death—without permitting me to renew with the voice of my heart the vows so fondly uttered. Mine you shall be, in

the eyes of the world and of men, as you vowed to be in the sight of God and his angels, on the day, when calling them to witness, I placed on your finger a gold ring, the symbol of eternity. Do not allow blame, or reproaches, to distress or disquiet you; they cannot apply to you. Reason will soon dissipate such injustice, and time mitigate prejudices, as it will equally prove to you my infinite love and lasting constancy.

“CARLOS.”

It would be impossible to depict the various emotions of surprise, regret, and distress, imprinted on the expressive countenance of the Asistentita, who could never conceal any of her emotions, as she read the letter. When she had finished, it dropped from her hands, and falling on her knees, she exclaimed, “Santa Maria!”

A long silence ensued, that no one ventured to interrupt, and the Señora was so absorbed in her painful reflections, that she did not even hear Elia’s distressing sobs.

Large tears trickled down Maria’s squalid cheeks, while gazing at her dear Señorita, with such an expression of love and regret,



that her very soul seemed to be written in her countenance. Don Benigno kept his eyes fixed on his mistress, in anguish and dismay.

"This, then, was the cause!" said the Asistenta, but suddenly paused.

Elia, however, who perfectly comprehended her, finished the sentence. "Yes," said she, "this was why the Marquesa came, as it was her duty to do, in order to undeceive me, to prevent my ignorance taking advantage of the love and devotion of her son; and her conduct was dictated by delicacy, in thus herself pronouncing the interdict that was to replace things on their proper footing, without abasing the person to whom it applied. You see, therefore, dear mother, that the Marquesa only acted as became the good and noble mother of Carlos, and the generous Señora interested in my welfare. Your indignation against her evidently therefore only proceeded from your ignorance of the motives of her conduct. If you could only know, mother, all my grief and remorse at having been the cause of alienating the families whom I love and venerate, and to whom I owe so much! Oh! mother," she continued, kneel-

ing before her, "I implore of you to be reconciled to your sister! Do not let me be like the serpent that the charitable woodman brought home, and that stung the breast that sheltered it! Let your heart do justice to the admirable mother, watching over the honour of her family as she watched over their cradle in their infancy, averting from them dangers of which in those days they were unconscious, and to which passion now blends them. Forgive her well founded apprehensions: as I was the unhappy cause of discord, allow me now to be the bearer of the olive branch of reconciliation."

"No," replied the Asistentia. "I pardon the wrong she did me, but not that towards the persons I love. I can forgive anything but hardness of heart. Without consulting me—contrary to my wishes—she revealed a secret not her own; and after bringing you to the brink of the grave, neither her heart nor her conscience suggested that she should even inquire after you! This was not only unfeeling towards myself, but an utter want of Christian love and charity, which are the keys of heaven! Never again, my child," said she, raising her,

"allude to this subject; the more gentle, lowly, and forgiving you are, the more harsh and egotistical does she appear in my eyes, so your entreaties only serve to make me feel more indignant with Inés."

The Asistenta, after saying these words, became absorbed in painful meditations. "I who saw nothing!" said she, mentally; "it was unpardonable—blind—blind indeed! An Orrea, a descendant of King Pedro!—it could not be. Inés was indeed right; my child would have been far happier in her convent. It is my fault that she is so miserable. Is it possible, that out of good so much evil comes? that love and kindness can prove so pernicious when carried to excess?"

These reflections preyed on the mind of the excellent Asistenta. "Don Benigno," said she, "you who have studied, can perhaps explain to me why people who are guided by prudence, and common sense, attain their object better than those who are influenced chiefly by blind love and kindness?"

"Señora," said he, "my studies have not been extensive, and I don't remember ever to have heard this point explained; but to

my limited judgment it appears, that it is because the quality of prudence represents this world, and that of love, Heaven; and the Gospel says, 'we cannot serve two masters.' "

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE sudden knowledge the Asistenta had acquired, of the mutual passion of the two beings whom she most dearly loved on earth, had been a terrible shock to her. The painful strife between her affection and her reason, and the deep distress she felt at having, by her improvidence, caused a misfortune that might have been avoided by attending to the prudent counsels of her sister, gave rise to a perpetual struggle in her mind, hitherto so tranquil, an incessant uneasiness that weakened her moral strength, increased, also, by the sad vacuum she felt in being separated from all her family, as Clara had been ordered to Cadiz for the benefit of sea bathing. This state of suffering sadly undermined her physical strength also.

In vain did Pedro stuff a turkey with chesnuts, in vain did Maria put forth all her skill, and study her choicest receipts for the most exquisite delicacies. Her Señora, formerly so particular on these points, would eat scarcely anything; and the maid, who slept in the adjoining room, declared that during the night she heard her mistress sighing, and tossing about, evidently unable to sleep; and in the morning she never returned from church till a late hour.

Fernando, who had never failed to visit his aunt, daily—loving her with the same tenderness that all her relations felt towards her—consulted with the family medical man, as to the cause of the evident decline in the health of the Señora, and the latter suggested the benefit that might be derived from change of air. The long nights of October had brought with them a cooler atmosphere, so Fernando easily persuaded his aunt to go to her country residence sooner than usual, urging that Elia, who still looked sadly delicate, would also profit by country breezes.

They commenced their journey; but no longer in the same joyous and gay mood

as formerly; the birds, the flowers, and all the charms of nature, no more attracted their eyes.

A month afterwards, the mansion of the Asistententa had entirely changed its aspect. It was no longer the tranquil, hospitable dwelling with its rose coloured atmosphere, welcoming its guests with the same hospitality and cordiality, displayed by its mistress. No; a gloomy silence reigned around; agitated and melancholy faces were alone to be seen, and all the doors stood ajar. A table with writing materials had been placed close to the iron screen in the court, and on it lay a paper, covered with the names of the numerous persons who had hastened to inscribe themselves on the list of inquirers for the health of the good Asistententa. On the beginning of the page these words were written:—"The patient is in the greatest danger."

In the Asistententa's bed room there was scarcely any light. Within the damask curtains, that fell from the massive tester of the bed, lay the Señora, the only one in the house who, in this hour of danger, preserved her wonted serenity; on one side of her bed was Elia, and on the other Maria;

Don Benigno stood at the foot. For six days they had scarcely left their post, or taken any nourishment, except the soup that Pedro insisted on their swallowing, impressing on them the absolute necessity of keeping up their strength, for the sake of the invalid herself. None of them spoke or wept, they scarcely seemed even to breathe—their life appeared suspended.

Five physicians were consulting in an adjoining apartment. Fernando, leaning on a table, was eagerly listening to them, but though pale, he was perfectly calm. Pedro trembling, and evidently in the deepest dejection, was standing near the door.

“Señor Marqués,” said the head physician addressing Fernando, “it is no use attempting to conceal the truth—there is no hope! Since the Señora returned from the country, her illness has made rapid progress. Some moral shock has evidently caused her extreme weakness, and the presentiment of her approaching death. She must prepare for eternity!”

Fernando inclined his head, in token of having heard these words. “Pedro,” said he, “let the confessor of the Señora be summoned.”



Pedro left the room, covering his face with his hands.

Fernando then wrote the following line, which he sent by a servant to the house of the Marquesa: "Mother, our aunt is about to receive Extreme Unction."

The confessor speedily arrived, and repaired, along with Fernando, to the room of the patient, who was not surprised at seeing him, as he had repeatedly visited her during her illness, at her own request, that she might confess to him.

"How do you feel, Señora?" said the confessor.

"Well!" said she, half opening her dim eyes.

"Is there anything you wish to say to me?" continued he.

"Nothing," replied the Señora. "My worldly affairs are all settled; but I wish to receive the Holy Sacrament, if you consider me worthy to do so."

"I will joyfully," said he, "administer to you those sources of grace and comfort."

Elia uttered a low groan.

"My poor, darling child!" said the Asis-tenta, looking at her fondly.

Fernando wished Elia to withdraw, but she clung to the pillar of the bed.

"Let her remain, Fernando," said the Asistentá; "it is such a comfort to me to see her by my side."

When the solemn rite was over, the dying woman seemed absorbed in holy and peaceful meditations. Her confessor interrupted them by saying,

"Señora, I know that every shadow of resentment against the Marquesa is effaced from your heart."

"Oh! entirely—entirely," said she; "I deplore not seeing her before I die."

"Your wish shall be fulfilled," replied the Father; and the Marquesa, pale and trembling, drew near her dying sister, who clasped her in her arms; while Esperanza fell on her knees, sobbing, beside her.

"Sister," said the Asistentá, in a feeble voice, "how happy you have made me!" and she fell back exhausted by emotion. After an interval of silence, she again opened her eyes, and said, "Inés; my Elia, my poor child—she will be alone and forsaken."

The Marquesa turned to Elia, who was still in the same place, overwhelmed with

grief, and going up to her, she embraced her tenderly, saying, "I accept the charge, sister."

"Father above!" murmured the Asis-tenta, "I die tranquil! Her virtue, her position, and her happiness are secure! May God send down His blessing on all here, and make your life as happy as my death! Oh! merciful Lord, receive my soul!"

"Thus," said the priest, "pass away the souls of the just, into the bosom of God. Let us pray."

All prostrated themselves with that solemn respect which the presence of death inspires, and those profound sentiments of awe, and feelings of anguish, which rend the heart of those who survive the beings they love.

"Mother, mother!" cried Elia in despair, and in a state of insensibility she was conveyed to her own apartment.

"Come with me, Esperanza," said the Marquesa, taking her daughter's arm, who was kissing the lifeless hands of her aunt. "Go and weep with Elia, and mourn together like two children who have lost a fond mother."

Esperanza hastened to obey.

The Marquesa gave the necessary orders, and made every arrangement that the melancholy occasion demanded. She wished to send for those women whose office it is to place the dead in their shroud; but Maria opposed this vehemently. "No, Señora," said she; "no mercenary hands shall touch her. I, alone, must perform these last services for her."

They proceeded to clear the room, when they perceived Don Benigno, hid in the ample folds of the curtains, his eyes wildly fixed on the corpse, his hands clasped, and stretched out towards her. He neither wept nor spoke, and allowed himself to be taken out of the room, like a man who has been completely stunned by a heavy blow.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ON the following day, the bells sounded their solemn death peal; holy sounds that elevate hearts to Heaven. Thick wax tapers, in antique candelabras, like guardians of the dead, were placed in the court, the staircase, and the corridors, of this house of death. The walls of the large saloon were hung with black, the windows were closed, and the room brilliantly illuminated. The relations and friends of the deceased were here assembled, all seated according to the most rigorous scale of precedence.

Fernando, and his nearest relatives, were standing in the anteroom, in the deepest mourning, and receiving the condolences of those who had just returned with him from the funeral rites, which had been celebrated, with the greatest magnificence,

in the adjacent church. And now this house, to which all Seville had once flocked, was empty and void: like a head without thoughts, like a breast without a heart. This very morning, *she* had been carried lifeless down that spacious staircase, where her presence had always been like the glad harbinger of spring; whereas, now, she was gone hence to be seen no more, leaving a blank in every heart, and an orphan in every poor pensioner. This sad outward mourning pomp lasted for nine days, though within many hearts, it was to last for ever.

On the tenth day, Elia was in her room, which she had hitherto refused to leave, in her overwhelming state of grief. The worthy Doña Marianita was with Elia, who suffered her presence, remembering the kindness the deceased Asistenta had always shown this excellent creature, who was uttering all the commonplace consolations, so usually employed on similar occasions.

"It is a saint the more in Heaven," said she.

"Yes," replied Elia; "but, alas! one less on earth!"

“How many sorrows, and how much suffering, God has spared her by taking her to Himself.”

“But of how much happiness and pleasure, have many been deprived by her loss!”

“It is our duty, Elia, to submit to the trials sent by God, in this vale of tears.”

“It is intended that we should feel them, otherwise they would not be trials, nor this world a vale of tears.”

“But, Elia, of what use, then, are reason and religion?”

“To make us feel more acutely.”

“However, my dear, when there is no remedy for a misfortune!”

“This—this is, indeed, the grief that rends my heart!” exclaimed Elia, hiding her face in the cushions of the sofa, sobbing bitterly.

Doña Marianita resumed her category of every day consolations, devoid of force, logic, or effect, and yet not to be despised, as they testify the amiable wish to console the mourner, however little they may succeed in doing so; for the wounds of the heart there is no balm, except that of love and sympathy, which, though they cannot

cure them, may at least alleviate their severity.

At the very moment when Elia had given way to this paroxysm of sorrow, the door opened, and the Marquesa entered.

"My child," said she, "how is it that you are not in mourning?"

The poor girl had never thought on the subject.

"Come," continued the Marquesa, "dress yourself in black, and follow me."

The docile girl obeyed at once, put on her mantilla and black petticoat, and followed the Marquesa to the large saloon, where they found all the family assembled. A notary was seated at a table, on which a sealed parchment was lying.

Seated in a corner, dressed in black, his head drooping, and his hands crossed, was Don Benigno, a prey to the most painful anxiety, as well as to the deepest grief. When he saw Elia, he stretched out his arms to her, who precipitated herself into them, and she and the good old man mingled their tears.

"My dear child, endeavour to be calm," said the Marquesa, to the disconsolate orphan; "take this place beside me, and



control your feelings, as the present occasion imperatively requires."

"Señores," said the notary, when all were silent, "this is the will of the deceased Señora, Doña Maria Isabel Orrea de Calatrava—may her soul rest in peace! This testament has been duly and legally executed, and deposited in my office, and we are now called on to open the seals."

Elia rose. "Why should I be present during this cruel scene, when the voice of my mother will be heard, even from the recesses of her coffin?"

"You must stay," replied the Marquesa, "because you are probably interested in this will, and it is incumbent on you to assist at its opening."

"Señora, I entreat of you to remember," implored Elia, "that this is a family transaction, and that I am a stranger."

"Elia," answered the Marquesa, with gentle firmness, "I impose it on you as a positive duty to remain, by the rights your mother bequeathed me over you, on her deathbed; it is a homage to her memory. If there is more tenderness in weeping and lamenting, there is more merit in respecting

and fulfilling the wishes of those whom God calls to Himself."

Elia seated herself again, and the notary opened the will, and began to read it. After various legacies and pious donations, the testament declared Elia to be the heiress of the entire property.

"Santa Maria!" exclaimed she, her pale face flushing up to a bright crimson; "Santa Maria!" repeated she, with even more sorrow than surprise.

"How!" said the Marquesa, "does this astonish you?—no one else will be surprised."

"Heavens!" replied Elia, who, the colour having again faded from her cheeks, looked even paler than before, "this is the only sorrow my sainted mother ever caused me! Her love for me tempted her to commit an enormity, an injustice, that is totally indefensible. Señor," said she, addressing the notary, "I beg you will instantly prepare a document, which may be completed this very day—so anxious am I to get rid of a burden which distresses me so much. I beg you will distinctly express that I renounce this unexpected inheritance, that it may pass to the legitimate heirs."

The Marquesa rose: "Elia," said she, sternly, "such a document, if drawn out, would be utterly null, and of no value. You are a minor, and such an action would be contrary to my express will, and I am the person to whom your dying mother delegated her powers over you; besides, how do you presume so lightly to disobey the will of your mother, who is scarcely cold in her grave?"

"But what use is it of to me? what can I do with such wealth?" exclaimed Elia, with the most ingenuous and simple conviction.

"It is yours," replied the Marquesa; "age and time will teach you its use and management."

"But I do not want to have it—I would rather not!" insisted Elia. "I give it up to its lawful possessors, which is both natural and right."

"And do you really think, you innocent child, that we would accept from you a property which was not bequeathed to us by its possessor? If you imagine such a possibility, your inexperience can alone be your excuse."

On hearing this speech, which the Mar-

quesa uttered with stern dignity, Elia was silent.

"Could you think us so selfish," said Fernando, gently, to her, "as to accept your noble disinterestedness and generous sacrifice?"

"But what power on earth," said Elia, after a few moments of reflection, "can force me to consider as mine, what I am resolved not to accept?"

"The intention of the testatrix," answered the Marquesa, "the solemn voice of the dead, which enjoins on you not to decline, as well as on us not to accept."

"What am I to do?—what do you advise?" asked Elia, when she was once more alone with Maria and Don Benigno.

"If your timid conscience has any scruples," said the former, "give up the Orrea property to them, which is comparatively small, and rest satisfied with that of Calatrava, which is large, and as completely your own as the hair on your head."

"What shall I do, Don Benigno?" said Elia, without paying any attention to what Maria said.

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are

God's," answered Don Benigno, unhesitatingly.

Elia stretched out her hand with gratitude to the person who so well comprehended her.

And yet the Baronesa de San Bruno said, that very evening, at a Tertulia, "Do you know the news? The Asistentia, who was in her dotage, has left her whole property to that artful foundling, a creature as cunning as a serpent, and who, for this very purpose, contrived to cause a quarrel between the sisters-in-law, who had always previously lived on such affectionate terms. I wonder what will become of Inés and her pride, who so eagerly anticipated leaving all her old sticks of furniture, and transferring herself to the fine mansion of the Calatravas! What a disappointment!—pretty scenes have been going on there! I hear that at the opening of the will there was a perfect St. Quintin; and they tell me that the newly enriched young lady is so delighted, that she even forgot to put on decent mourning. Now we can see through the art of the sly minx! Carlos, too, knew pretty well what he was about; he will marry her, of course, and become the

possessor of the property, and the Marquesa must gulp it down, however odious to her—a very good lesson to her silly pride!”

Such is the world! thus do we fulfil the Divine command, to “love our neighbour as ourselves!”

## CHAPTER XX.

THE just, pious, and merciful version of the late events, given by the Baronesa, was repeated in a crowded *café* in Madrid, by an officer recently arrived from Seville, with that blind faith with which everything ill natured is received, a degree of credulity rarely exercised where praise is in question. This gentleman formed one of a gay circle of young men, seated round a table, on which was a large bowl of punch. None of them had observed a young man in deep mourning, seated at a table behind the one they occupied; he was leaning his head on his hand, and only moved to look towards the door, as if he were impatiently expecting some one. But scarcely had the officer finished recounting this series of abominable falsehoods, when he saw the young man in

mourning standing opposite him, pale and haughty.

"Sir," said he, "what you have just said is an infamous calumny!" The surprise caused by this sudden and angry address, was so great and so general, that no one spoke.

"Caballero," said the indignant officer, at last, "what right have you to constitute yourself the judge of my words?"

"The right," answered the youth, "which truth gives to every honourable man to defend her cause, and the obligation that justice imposes on every well constituted heart to rebut calumny."

"It is Don Carlos Orrea," whispered one of his friends to the officer.

"In that case," said the officer, addressing himself to Carlos, "I beg you to believe that it was not my intention to offend you. I was not aware that you were present."

"I believe not, indeed!" replied Carlos, whose voice trembled with indignation. "I do not demand satisfaction for any offence offered to myself personally, but for a glaring outrage against truth. I demand that you should retract your vile calumnies, if you have invented them, and if not, that



you should at once give up the name of their author."

"I would, with all the pleasure in life, retract a thing which concerns me so little, and that I only repeated from hearsay," rejoined the officer, "if I were convinced that the accusations were unfounded; but as for obeying a command, I recognise no such word out of the service."

"But I, Señor," said Carlos, "hope to oblige you to give credit to a truth that I intend to defend with my sword."

"I am at your orders."

"To-morrow morning, then, let us meet outside the Puerta de Recoletos."

"I shall not keep you waiting."

Carlos bowed, and quitted the room, leaving the group, recently so jovial, in universal consternation.

"He is right—and I also!" said the officer. "How highly to be reprobated is the facility with which people speak of others, of whom they know nothing!"

Just as Carlos was leaving the *café*, he met a friend, whose arm he took, and as they were walking together, he said, "I have been expecting you here, according to our agreement yesterday, to tell you of my

project to go to Seville, and to discuss various matters with you. Now the aspect of affairs is changed, and I have a very different favour to ask of you."

His friend was much distressed when Carlos disclosed to him that this favour was, that he should be his second in a duel. Carlos then went home, where he burned many papers, and wrote various letters; among others, a long one to Elia, and another to his brother Fernando, only to be delivered in case of his death.

The next morning at half past six, the officer was prostrate with a ball in his shoulder; and Carlos, severely wounded in the side, was transported in a state of unconsciousness, by his inconsolable friends, to an obscure house in a distant suburb.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE Marquesa had taken Elia home with her, where she was the object of courteous kindness on the part of the Marquesa, and the most unremitting care and affection from Esperanza; but Elia said nothing as to her future projects, and this silence made the Marquesa very uneasy.

She sometimes thought that Elia, as heiress of so fine a property, might consider that some of the obstacles were removed to the unfitting alliance she had projected. She also dreaded, that if Elia prolonged her stay in her house, Carlos would entertain fresh hopes, and would insist on returning, disregarding her authority as his mother, taking advantage of the hospitality she had so generously offered the disconsolate orphan, and which she had

promised her dying sister to continue. Delicacy did not permit her to take the initiative as to Elia's future plans, but an opportunity, however, soon presented itself to do so naturally.

One morning when they were all seated in the crystal gallery overlooking the garden, the Marquesa had been reading the *Christian Year* aloud, while Elia and Esperanza were engaged in embroidering an altar cloth at the same frame, when after a pause, the former said—

“Elia, have you been long acquainted with Lorenzo Rioseco?”

“Yes, Señora,” replied Elia, “I saw him very frequently in my benefactress's house.”

“He is the son,” continued the Marquesa, “of one of my dearest friends, and of distinguished family, though not wealthy. You know his personal advantages, and refinement of manner, but you do not know so well as I do, the admirable qualities he possesses, his noble sentiments, and his exemplary conduct. He has loved you ever since he first saw you, and though I do not consider love indispensable in a union which is in every way suitable, and likely to be happy, still it is better that it should

exist, when every other circumstance is in harmony. He wishes to make you his wife, and I have promised his mother to support his anxious wish with the more zeal, that I feel assured he will contribute to your happiness, as well as you to his. As I promised your mother on her death-bed to supply her place, I think it my duty to advise you to accept this proposal, as if you bring Rioseco a rich inheritance, he in return confers on you a position, and a distinguished rank in the world."

Elia did not look up while the Marquesa was speaking, but she coloured violently, and was evidently distressed and annoyed, by the Marquesa's speech; but suppressing this impulse of a noble soul, feeling itself humiliated, she replied with gentleness but firmness, while large tears coursed down her cheeks—

"Señora, some time before the death of my benefactress, my resolution was irrevocably fixed; my intentions always have been, and still are, to return to my convent, having had the misfortune to lose her, from whom I neither ought nor could have separated during her life. In coming to your house, my sole object was to demonstrate

all the gratitude your benefits inspire me with, by accepting them. Had it not been for this, I would now be with the nuns, my sisters on earth, and I trust one day to be my sisters in heaven also."

The Marquesa gazed at Elia with admiration; now that she no longer feared her, she appeared in all her true lustre in her eyes. She felt what a sublime sacrifice it was, at her age, and with her beauty and wealth, to give up a world where she would be flattered and admired; to renounce her love, and the struggle in which she could scarcely doubt being victorious. This was an elevation of soul, a degree of self abnegation that touched her deeply. A tear glittered in her eyes, fixed on this sweet simple convent flower, and she felt an impulse to embrace her warmly.

"My child," she said, after a pause, "I admire your resolution, without, however, approving of it. Before having recourse to so decisive a step, you are bound closely to examine your vocation, and this cannot be done in a few days. At your age, intentions are variable, your life is only beginning; do not lightly decide on your future. Remember the advantages of your

position, which age and experience will enable you to appreciate more fully than you do at present."

The Marquesa being summoned to receive a visitor, Elia and Esperanza were left alone.

"Do not separate from me," said Esperanza, embracing Elia; "let us remain together—let us marry according to my mother's wish, that we may live in peace and united."

Elia could only answer by her tears, and retired precipitately to her sitting room. There she found Don Benigno, who had come to see her; he was talking with Maria, but they did not seem very harmonious. Maria was evidently irritated; Don Benigno as imperturbable as ever, but shaking his head in token of his entire disapprobation of what Maria was striving to inculcate on him, both by words and gestures.

Elia entered, drying her tears.

"Blessed Virgin!" exclaimed Maria, "what is it? what distresses you, my own sweet child? don't cry, for you break my heart—who has offended you? who has grieved you?"

"No one," replied Elia; "on the con-

trary, I have received fresh proofs of love and sympathy. I weep, Maria, at taking leave of those who so benevolently received me, in my forlorn condition."

"Oh! that's quite a different thing," said Maria, "I don't mind that; it's better to cry for too much kindness, than for unkindness. Where are we going?"

"To the convent," said Elia.

"To the convent!" exclaimed Maria. "Have you lost all at once sense, memory, and a will of your own? is it in this way you mean to keep up your consequence, you poor weak creature? don't you know that the Señora left you all she had, that it might come back into the family by your marriage?"

"You are entirely mistaken, Maria," said Don Benigno; "our departed Señora—may she rest in peace!--only bequeathed her property to her adopted daughter, that she might do all the good she could with it in death, as she had done in life."

"Don Benigno is right," said Elia, "his good judgment admits no compromise; passions do not blind him, nor self interest move him, nor worldly declamation intimidate him. There are only two existences



possible for me; the one brilliant, but of incessant strife; the other humble, but of enduring peace. The latter is consonant to my feelings, the other in the highest degree distasteful to me, so I choose what is most congenial. My benefactress left you both a comfortable independence—remain here along with Don Benigno, to take care of the house in which she lived and died, and which her life sanctified, for strangers shall never profane it.”

“I have no objections to Don Benigno,” answered Maria, “he and Pedro can both remain in the house; but, do you really suppose, I would allow you to go to the convent without me?”

Elia embraced her nurse. She then summoned Don Benigno to a secret conference, where she finally made the arrangements she had for some time contemplated. At her death, the property was to pass to the family of the Orreas. In the meantime, its rental, any additional purchases of land, or improvements, or mortgages paid off, were all to go to increase the original property. A fifth part of the said rents to be spent in works of charity. Don Benigno was appointed steward.

Maria, in witnessing what she considered such marvellous folly, did not attempt any longer to oppose it. She took refuge in her tent, like Achilles, remembering that the year of noviciate contained many days, and that many events might occur during that space of time. She fully believed that they were all a little too hasty in taking these measures during Carlos's absence, and she already anticipated on his return, her triumph over Don Benigno, who was never hurried out of his steady pace, and his chronometer regularity.

Some days afterwards, Elia having inflexibly persisted in her resolution, the Marquesa took her herself to the convent.

"I restore to you," said she to the Abbess, "your daughter, as pure as when she left your convent, and bringing back with her great virtues which she has acquired, and given proofs of in the world."

Esperanza and Elia embraced each other fondly, and Elia passed through the grating, which closed on her.

When crossing the hall of the convent, the Marquesa met Don Benigno and Maria, conveying Elia's luggage.

"How?" said the Marquesa to Maria,

"are you coming to shut yourself up in a convent with Elia? this is a proof of attachment which does you honour."

"Yes, Señora," replied Maria, "my intention is to dissuade her from her purpose, by day and by night. She shall never profess, if I can help it."

"You have also come," said the Marquesa to Don Benigno, without further noticing Maria.

"Yes, Señora," replied he, "I came to encourage her in her holy resolution."

When the Marquesa had passed on, Maria turned reproachfully to Benigno. "Then you too are preparing an altar, on which to sacrifice this innocent lamb, and to separate her from Don Carlos; it is contrary to the will of God! and you, who always said you were so fond of the dear girl—live and learn."

"Maria," replied Benigno, "you are more shortsighted than a mole."

"And you?" said Maria, sharply; "do you think you are as sharp as a needle?"

"If I do not see far, I see correctly."

"Correctly! far! as far as your nose."

"Come, Maria, after thirty years of kindly feeling let us part friends."

"Friends! no, Señor; no, I am not one of those who wish harm to my Señorita, and make a crony of that proud *Queen of Sheba*. Let us quarrel! yes, Señor, quarrel even to the Valley of Jehosaphat." Saying these words, she entered the convent hurriedly, and slammed the door in the worthy man's face.

## CHAPTER XXII.

CARLOS awoke from a state similar to that of a long dream. He raised himself in bed, and leaning on his elbow, anxiously examined the unknown room in which he found himself. At last his eyes turned on a person seated at his bedside. He uttered a sudden cry of surprise and delight, which awoke the person beside him, whom want of rest had rendered drowsy, and who now started up and embraced the delighted Carlos, saying, "Brother, brother!"

It was indeed Fernando, who, on the first tidings of what had occurred to Carlos, flew to Madrid, being on this occasion, as on every other, his protector, shield, and refuge; in short, the noble type of the elder brother, who, along with the family property and the sacred rights of primogeni-

ture, inherits the duties of a father, uniting to these the sympathy of a brother.

After the first embrace, so tender on the part of Fernando, and so vehement on that of Carlos, the latter anxiously asked what impression his unfortunate duel had made on his mother. Fernando, however, tranquillized him by the assurance that it had been carefully concealed from her, and that she believed his illness to have arisen from natural causes. In answer to Carlos's eager questions about Elia, he answered that she was living with their mother, who showed her every possible kindness and attention. These words caused the most lively joy to Carlos, inspiring him with the most flattering hopes.

But Fernando was too frank and upright, not at once to dispel this delusion, so he said to his brother, "Do not flatter yourself, Carlos, nor imagine that the noble and generous conduct of our mother, is any proof of her withdrawing her well founded opposition to your purpose. The great wealth that Elia has inherited—which in the eyes of the world, no doubt, appears to approximate your positions—these very riches, which *elevate* but do not *ennoble*, are,

I fear, brother, only a fresh obstacle to your wishes. Our mother would consider herself debased, if she gave to Elia when rich, the name of daughter, which she denied to her when poor! But Elia is resolved to return to her convent, her native country, as she calls it; and she is right, for its atmosphere is that of piety and peace."

Carlos made a violent gesture of rage and despair. "It is my mother," said he, vehemently, "who has persuaded her into it. She is resolved to sacrifice this angelic creature to her detestable pride; but she shall not succeed. No! if it be a merit to submit to the wishes of a just and kind mother, it would be only weakness to endure the despotism of one who is harsh and inflexible, in whom pride stifles every loving and generous sentiment."

"I should feel more indignant in listening to you speaking in such a manner, were it not that your state of moral and physical debility is such, that I can have no feeling towards you at this moment but that of compassion," said Fernando.

"Forgive me, brother!" said Carlos, holding out his hand to him; "but when I

think of Elia I cannot contain my misery! Do you really believe that I can ever submit to the idea of losing her? Am I not to be considered? I will never consent that she should be sacrificed—what would life be to me without her?"

"You would forget her in time," replied Fernando.

"Forget her, Fernando! You insult me by such an idea. Forget her!"

"Yes, brother. For God has made oblivion a moral necessity of our existence, as much as to breathe is indispensable to our physical frame; and thus our soul inhales oblivion unconsciously, just as our lungs do the air, by an irresistible influence."

"Worthy words of the cold blooded son of a cold blooded mother!" cried Carlos.

"Carlos," continued Fernando, calmly, "regrets feed the fire of passions, lamentations only make the flame burn more fiercely. There is only one mode of avoiding their ravages—to stifle them at once!"

"Impossible!" cried Carlos.



"You are mistaken; it is possible," replied Fernando. "And I can affirm it solemnly," continued he, in deep emotion, "for I have proved it by deeds."

On hearing the melancholy tone in which his brother spoke, Carlos turned in surprise, and looked at him attentively; his fine face was pale, but calm—the contraction of his dark eyebrows alone showed some hidden emotion.

"Fernando," said Carlos, "now I understand! You loved her when you were both children. Yes, you loved Clara!"

"Do not name her," said his brother. "I love her now like a dear sister. Only let my secret prove to you that feelings can be eventually conquered, and all selfishness banished from the heart."

"You are a hero, Fernando!"

"No," replied he; "only a man of principle. Come," said Fernando, observing the increasing emotion and feverishness of his brother, "this conversation has already lasted too long; it is absolutely necessary that you should rest and be quiet. Take no thoughts at present of future events; the main point now is entirely to recover your strength."

In a few days, Carlos was able to rise. Fernando was obliged then to tell him that the King was most indignant on hearing of his duel, and, although his adversary was fast recovering, resolved on punishing him as the aggressor. Carlos had thus no other alternative, although hearing also that his antagonist was entirely out of danger, than to take refuge in another country. He, therefore, departed, relying on the promise his brother made him, to use every possible means to enable him to return as soon as possible. He depended on his brother's word, as he would on the Gospel itself, and he had every reason to do so.

He also confided to his care a letter for Elia, in which he said, that being obliged, owing to some military arrangements, to be absent for a couple of months, he would not oppose her residing in the convent, where she could await his return in peace. The most profound and passionate tenderness pervaded the whole letter; he implored her a thousand times not to forget the promises she had made, and that he would soon return to claim their fulfilment, and that they gave him a right to snatch

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her from the very foot of the altar itself, to accomplish their mutual vows.

A few days afterwards this letter was received by Elia in her convent, while Carlos set off for England.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Marquesa was perfectly aware of Carlos's duel, though she affected to be ignorant of it. It caused her deep grief, notwithstanding she said to the friend, who communicated the distressing fact to her, "If all would do as Carlos did, on hearing his mother insulted, slanderers would place a better curb on their tongues."

While however Fernando passed his whole time at Madrid, in endeavouring to procure the pardon of his brother, his mother contrived, through the influence of her friends and relations, to prevent his succeeding in his efforts. She was most anxious that Carlos should not return till after Elia had professed; chiefly from her wish to avoid distressing scenes, which, to so grave and stern a character as her's, were

peculiarly repugnant. Hence it was that all Fernando's anxious applications proved fruitless, being paralyzed by a minister, who acted in the interest of the mother. All Fernando could do to console his brother, was by giving him fresh hope of the success of each application.

These delays were most exasperating to Carlos, who with that intense fondness every Spaniard feels for his country, and the woman he loves, was miserable when absent, and cursed his unlucky fate. All the splendours of London passed before his eyes like *ombres chinoises*, without interesting either his mind or his heart. He was assailed by the most profound melancholy, under the influence of the gray, neutral tinted sky—one of the inciting causes, probably, of that national malady, *spleen*. A cold fog envelopes the great city like a damp shroud; and above is a sky without stars, and all around, night without repose. The black, leafless trees, raise aloft their skeleton arms to Heaven, as if to implore burial—a strange contrast to the crisp snow, lying like a white pall on the ground. To him the days seemed endless, the nights eternal. But, in spite of his impression

that the clock of time must have suddenly stopped, the months chased each other along rapidly and restlessly. Winter sent forth its last storms in the Equinox, furious that the peaceful days of Spring were gradually encroaching on his gloomy nights; the sun, too, though pale and weak, came forth like a convalescent; the earth was covered with emerald turf, the fresh and verdant vestment of Spring; the country was putting forth all its brightness and lavishing all its smiles, and alluring the world by its enchantments to those rural spots, as lovely and romantic as its poetry. But nothing spoke to the heart of the banished Carlos, filled only with fond memories and eager hopes!

He felt his situation still more intolerable, when he calculated that there were now only two months to elapse of Elia's noviciate. He eagerly waited for the answer to the last petition which his brother had forwarded to him; but when it arrived, and he saw that, like the others, it was only another link in the heavy chain, forged to keep him away from his country, he became so indignant, that giving up all hope, and heedless of all results, he got his passport, and recklessly embarked for Spain.

With what intense delight did his heart palpitate, when he saw the coasts of Spain looming in the horizon. The bright azure of the sky and the brilliant blue of the sea, seemed developed like a turquoise shell, displaying in its bosom white Cadiz, lying ensconced within like a pearl. To his left he saw the city of San Lucar, like the urn on which the Betis reposes, with its coronal of rushes, its beard of silvery foam, and its breath of orange flowers. He saw Rota, Ports Real and San Maria, and the Island of San Fernando, forming a circle round Cadiz, like courtiers of Spring. Medina too was visible, like an alabaster nest. Within the bay, there was a moving forest of masts, embrowned by the sun of the tropics, hardened by the snows of the Pole, gaily announcing the names of their various nations by their language of colours; furling their sails like birds folding their wings; and trusting in their anchors, as commerce does, in good faith and confidence.

He gazed with pleasure at the lighthouse of San Sebastian, which Cadiz has removed to a rock in the middle of the sea, that the tumult of the city may not distract its attention, and that of the waves constantly

recall its holy mission: a granite Cyclops, a sentinel as undaunted as confidence, as vigilant as jealousy, while the sea lashes its feet with her waves, and dashes its foam on her face, keeping perpetual watch; a Christian vestal, nursing the small flame that sheds so bright a light; a holy flame, on which love impresses, in the perfidious darkness of night, the warning voice, *Beware!* a finger of fire, with which humanity indicates the dangers hidden by night; a good counsel, traversing space, storms, and darkness, conveyed from a brother to a brother; practical sympathy, uniting those who are solitary and in peril on the world of waters, to those who rest secure on a rock; a cry of love that gladdens the angels, who thus see that men still remember the precepts of the Holy Gospel.

Carlos saw this vast assemblage of objects, so spacious, so extensive, and yet so clear and distinct, owing to the pure transparency of the air, which prevents distant objects being confounded with each other. Over this immense picture was spread the Andalusian sky, which enchants like a bright smile, embellished by a loving glance, by the poetry of the infinite; its



magic power acting like magnetism on the soul; this sky, so pure that its azure is never obscured, save by white clouds like snow flakes, floating vaguely along, like the glance of an infant, or by night with its stars, as resplendent as the brilliants adorning a court beauty; this sky, always serene, always peaceable as virtue, is never dimmed by clouds till the arid earth proclaims, "I am thirsty!"

Scarcely had Carlos disembarked at Cadiz, and hurriedly traversed its regular, handsome streets, than he returned once more to the harbour, and embarked in a felucca for the Puerte San Maria, which though a city with a very small population, and its environs very sterile, has at least the merit of being gay and cheerful. He quickly traversed, in a light *calèche*, the three tiresome, monotonous leagues that separate this port from San Lucar, which rich in fruits, like Pomona, offers to the thirsty traveller its golden apples, and the pure crystal waters of its fountains. Where the eager sea absorbs the bright waters of the Guadalquiver, Carlos embarked in a steamer, which flew along with him towards Seville, as if guessing that it had the pri-

vilege of transporting a lover to the side of her he loved.

It was night when he arrived at Seville: the moon was shedding her mild lustre on the scene, lulled into sweet silence by the warbling of the nightingale, whose notes inspire such vague yet pleasing emotion, bringing tears to the eyes—and by the perfumed night breeze, refreshing nature, as the houris invigorate the air with their fragrant wings.

Those alone who embrace in Seville both their native home and their love, can enjoy all the infinite delight that filled Carlos's heart. The felicity of returning once more to his country, a happiness so dearly bought by absence, and the full savour of the enchanting harmony produced by love, spring, songs, solitude, and the moon, which, like the heart that loves, is placed between heaven and earth.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE clocks were striking seven, when Carlos knocked at the gate of the convent of Madre de Dios.

"I will call the portress," said a voice well known to him.

"Maria!" exclaimed he.

"Who calls my name?" asked the same voice.

"Do you not know me, Maria?"

A sharp cry of joy was heard from within, and hurried steps were heard trotting off at these glad words.

"I knew it! I knew he would come! I never doubted it for a moment!" The portress quickly arrived, and having announced himself as the son of the Marquesa de Val Jara, they gave him the key of the parlour. Carlos entered a spacious

apartment. To the left of the door was a strong, high, double grating, behind which was drawn a black curtain: upon the grating was this inscription:—*Nostra conversatio in Cælis est.*

On the opposite side a small grated window, the upper part of which was open, shed with perfect equality on the whole apartment, a grave and pallid light, the reflection of which died away on the black curtain. On the wall in front of the door, was a picture of large dimensions, representing Santa Cecilia's nuptials, renouncing the seductions of love, converting her husband to the spirituality of her elevated faith, transforming the nuptial couch into an altar, crowned by the angels with white roses. Some low confessional chairs and seats, covered with old tapestry, with gilt ornaments, were placed round the walls of the room, which were as white and pure as snow.

On entering this austere and silent retreat, Carlos shrank as if a cold hand had been placed on his heart, and stopped its pulsations. He felt like the brilliant bird of the tropics, whose fate transports him to the branches of the Lapland pine, with its

leaves like needles; the songster trembles, folds its bright wings, and is sad and silent.

Carlos sank into a chair: suddenly the curtain was rapidly drawn aside, and a large and bright apartment was disclosed to the dazzled eyes of the young man—and standing in the middle of the apartment, he saw Elia! Carlos could not speak, but stretched out his arms to her.

“Oh, Carlos!” said she, in accents of the most entire serenity, and the most tender love; “what pleasure you confer on me, by coming here on the happy and solemn day when I am to pronounce my vows. You alone, of all those I love, and who love me, were wanting!”

Carlos fixed his eyes on Elia as earnestly as if she were an enigma that he was anxious to solve. Nothing could be more lovely than this enchanting apparition, surrounded by a halo of light. Her eyes shone serenely, reflecting her pure and loving soul; her black eyebrows were beautifully arched on her white, noble forehead; the hood that encircled her face, delineated its perfect oval; her white dress, that fell in ample folds to the ground, and

the veil, that floated from her head to her feet, imparted to her youthful figure a sweet and grave dignity, so that none could look on her without mingled feelings of respect and admiration. At this instant Carlos felt that his hopes were fast withering, like flowers uprooted from the earth to be placed on the altar of a saint; but suppressing this painful impression, he said,

“Elia! my Elia! I do not come to witness your vows, but to prevent you from uttering them; I come to fulfil my promises, and to claim the fulfilment of yours. Perhaps you have forgotten them. Is then the memory of the past blotted out of your remembrance?”

“Everything has been effaced from my heart in the convent, but my daily increasing gratitude, which now entirely absorbs it.”

“Can you dare to speak thus to me?” exclaimed Carlos, passionately. “Can you be so cruel, with the same hand that distributes alms, and dries the tears of those who suffer, and adorns the altar with flowers, as to stab to the heart the man who loves you, the companion of your

childhood, of him whom your mother called her son?"

"I dare to resign his love," answered Elia, "to restore him to the right path, from which he had strayed."

"So those are the ideas that have been instilled into you? This is the path of self-sacrifice pointed out to you? but to me it is that of despair! Elia, can you have the heart to destroy for ever the happiness of the man who loves you? You alone! You, so gentle, so good! to be cruel and ungrateful! so young, so lovely! Are you insane enough to renounce the pleasures of life, persisting in a design that all must condemn?"

"And who could condemn me?" replied Elia, gently, "for separating myself for ever from a world where all have so much cause for sorrow? Find me even one person who can say, the world has brought me unalloyed happiness, inalterable tranquillity. I have preserved in it a pure conscience, and free from all malice. No word, no smile, no look, has ever wounded me; I have lived free from hopes and fears; or else I have seen the former vanish, and the latter realized without suffering. I have

never met with ingratitude or malevolence, or if I did, my heart was not pierced by it. Find me one, Carlos, in the world who can say, I have seen my youth pass away without regret, or old age approach without repulsion. If you can do this, it will be a solid reason to offer against my purpose; a practical eulogy in favour of the world, a triumphant argument. Carlos, the glance I had of the world was rapid; but it was comprehensive, and I felt its reaction in my heart. Even without the directing hand of Providence, my sensitiveness would trace out the path I ought to follow. I love and cherish it, and never will depart from it. Yes, Carlos, my days, passed in silence and in prayer, will glide along in sweet monotony, like honey dropping from the honey-comb!"

"How tranquil, how serene, how cold you are!" said Carlos, bitterly.

"Because, Carlos, I have prayed for strength."

"No, you never loved me!" exclaimed Carlos, covering his face with both his hands to conceal his tears.

"I have loved you well, and I love you still," answered Elia, in a sweet and sympa-



thizing tone; "but in the tenderly infinite love I bear you, there is neither presence nor absence; past, present, or future; time sweeps along without affecting it more than it does eternity. It is a love which does not estrange the heart from God, but identifies it more closely with that Great Being who is the fountain of all perfect love."

"But this love," said Carlos, disconsolately, "which separates those who are attached on earth, does not give happiness, Elia!"

"What do you call happiness, Carlos?" asked Elia, "if it consists in the peace insured by the absence of all passions, in repose of conscience, in the grateful calm felt by those for whom the past has no remorse to agonize the soul, nor the future any torturing fears; if it consists in a life where there is tranquil sleep, and a peaceful waking, in hoping for a happy death, without either desiring or fearing it; if this be true happiness, and without alloy, I have found it, Carlos, and secured it for my own!"

Carlos, deeply moved, his heart lacerated, but his soul elevated, leant his head on the back of the chair, covering his eyes, in the

utmost agitation, while tears of misery were rolling down his cheeks.

"Carlos," continued Elia, with more emotion, and in a tone of entreaty, "do not distress me by your tears, do not pain me by your grief! Love me sufficiently not to disturb my tranquil felicity; be strong and generous, and soar with me to that height whence I contemplate the interests and passions of the earth. Neither talent, knowledge, nor genius can elevate you to this height. It is *Faith* alone, Divine Faith, that can fill the most vast ocean, or find a recess within the most simple heart. It causes us to see that life is short, and worthless—a mere nothing when compared with eternity. At this height we are far removed, indeed, from earth, but nearer Heaven. Heaven!" repeated she, looking tenderly at him, and stretching out her hands with touching and holy exultation, "there, above, all loving hearts will unite in the celestial and perfect happiness of everlasting beatitude!"

Elia thus inspired, and her eyes swimming with holy tears, appeared to Carlos, like some divine apparition, descended from

regions above, and about to return to celestial mansions.

Deeply affected and fascinated, moved by an irresistible impulse, Carlos knelt before her, and leant his head against the grating, exchanging one last fond look with her whom he so dearly loved, while the black curtain was slowly closed, and hid Elia for ever from his eyes.

## EPILOGUE.

EVEN amid the torpid materialism, which is gradually overspreading the world, like the rising waves of a universal deluge, in which our faith and hopes are too likely to perish, the foregoing tale has proved, that there are souls that burn like divine torches in the darkness, like lighthouses in the night, so elevated that passion would only profane them, and who can only be loved on earth, as the angels are loved in Heaven.

If we are asked what became of the other personages who acted in the various scenes we have depicted; as a novelist is bound to give an account of those whom he has brought forward, we might quote the harmonious reply given by Schiller to those who wished to know what became of Thekla?

“Do you ask what becomes of the nightingales whose songs delight us in spring? They only lived while they loved.”

Still, life is composed of two parts—the ideal and the material; and we shall only refer to the latter, which survives the former.

Fernando fell at Madrid, on the ill-starred 7th of July, 1822, defending his King.

Carlos, faithful even to a lost cause, perished in the Tracadero, in the year 1823, in that unfortunate action in which blood was shed without enthusiasm, where there was fighting without hope, and fruitless death without victory.

The Marquesa bore bravely the death of Fernando, the beloved and perfect son, who had realized all her hopes; the son of her heart, worthy to be the head of the house of Orrea: she neither wore mourning, nor shed a tear. In her room was a beautiful portrait of her lost son, which she crowned with laurels and a branch of palm; but the death of Carlos broke her heart. He was the last of the Orreas, and the first of his race, who sacrificed his life in defence of a cause that was neither that of his religion, his king, or his country. Her existence lost all ani-

mation, and subsided into a mournful calm, like the sails of a ship when deprived of a vivifying breeze. She died in the arms of the inconsolable Esperanza, who had married a man of merit, chosen by her mother, as a fitting alliance for her daughter.

Esperanza had two sons; the eldest, educated at home, joined Don Carlos in 1837, and fell at the siege of Bilbao. The second, educated in the Artillery College, began his military career under the auspices of General de la Reina Cordoba, and was killed in the action of Mendigarria. Esperanza was overwhelmed with grief by so many cruel losses, and by seeing all the idols of her heart victims of the horrible civil wars—the most tremendous scourge that man can ever impose on himself. When distracted by sorrow and the anguish of all these severe trials, Esperanza went to see Elia in her convent, she always returned to her desolate home calm, resigned, and invigorated.



## *THE ALVAREDA FAMILY.*

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### PART I.

#### CHAPTER I.

**F**OLLOWING the curve of the ancient walls of Seville, which enclose it like a girdle of stone, and leaving to the right the river of Las Delicias, you arrive at the gate of San Fernando.

The plain extends from this gate in a direct line to the base of the craggy summits called Buena-Vista, the road crossing the rivulet Tagarete by a stone bridge, pursues a winding path along the crags, on the summit of which stand the ruins of a chapel.

Taking a bird's-eye view of this road, it looks like an arm stretched out from Seville to these ruins, elevating them apparently



in the air to attract attention, for the ancient chapel attached to it though small, and with no traces of artistic merit, yet forms a religious and historical record; a heritage of the great King Fernando the Third, whose memory is so popular, that he is admired as a hero, revered as a saint, and beloved as a sovereign. This truly great historical character, realising the *beau ideal* of the Spanish nation.

After having climbed these heights, the road descends on the opposite side, and passes by a valley through which runs a rivulet, its bed so assiduously swept by the currents, that its golden sand, and brilliant pebbles, are distinctly visible.

After fording the stream, a cheerful little inn is visible to the right, and to the left a Moorish Castle, which rears its haughty head on a hill, as if this eminence had been formed expressly for its pedestal.

This castle was given by Don Pedro of Castille to his handsome and celebrated favourite, Doña Maria of Padilla, whose name it still bears.

The property and the castle of Doña Maria, in the course of time, passed into the hands of the chapter of the Seville

Cathedral, no doubt as a pious donation. They sold it recently to a private individual.

The rich pastures, and luxuriant, fruitful olive plantations of Doña Maria, proved very lucrative to the purchaser. Historical reminiscences did not enter into his calculations, for shortly afterwards the ancient, gloomy and decayed castle appeared clothed in the whitest lime, adorned with borders of green turf, and windows of glittering glass. Thoroughly repaired, and standing haughtily erect, it was a type of the lovely Doña Maria herself; and indeed there was a belief among the pious peasantry, that this beautiful transgressor having expiated her sinful life, by several hundred years of purgatory, was now pardoned, and in the enjoyment of Divine Mercy. Those who were interested in ancient legends, and the solemn chronicles of that period, groaned and lamented, as if a tomb had been desecrated.

But let us proceed on our journey, which leads us through clumps of palm trees, and evergreen oaks, scattered over the pastures, till we reach the village of Dos Hermanas, situated on a sandy plain, two leagues from

Seville. To describe this village, which is in fact very ugly, as a picturesque and pleasing spot, would be a proof of an inventive but deceptive spirit, and we who are now to depict it, must adhere to truth.

Neither rivers, lakes, nor shady trees, are to be seen here, nor rural cottages with green *jalousies*, covered with creeping plants; we see no regal peacocks, nor Guinea fowls pecking the green turf; nor fine, straight avenues of trees, standing like slaves carrying umbrellas, to afford constant shade to the passers by. All this is wanting; it is distressing to acknowledge the fact. Here all is rustic, and devoid of elegance; but in exchange, you will meet with honest, cheerful faces, proving that it is a mistaken idea to suppose such things indispensable to happiness. Moreover, we shall find flowers in the courtyards of the houses, and before their doors, fine merry children, even more numerous than the flowers; you will find the pleasing tranquillity of the country, the charms of silence and solitude, an atmosphere of Eden and a sky of Paradise. These are the advantages which the village enjoys, and they amply compensate for all others.

The place is composed of some wide streets, the houses of one story, built in monotonous straight lines, though not parallel to each other, and opening on a large sandy square, extending like a yellow carpet, in front of a pretty church, rearing its ancient tower on high, crowned by a cross, as a soldier holds aloft his standard.

Behind the church is the oasis of this sterile landscape. In the wall is a door, which opens into a vast spacious court, adjoining the chapel of Saint Ana, the guardian saint of the place; attached to the chapel and resting on it, is the small and humble dwelling of its sacristan, who is both clerk and sexton. The court is dotted over with cypresses of ancient date, gloomy and austere, and the gay and fertile gum cistus, of sudden growth, and slender texture, lavishing on the breeze its leaves, and flowers, and fragrance, knowing that its life is short; the orange tree also abounds, this polished grandee, this favourite son of the soil of Andalucia, where its life is so prized and so cherished. There is also the vine, which like children requires the aid of man to make it thrive and blossom, extending its luxuriant tendrils, as if caressing the

trellis work that supports it. There is certainly no doubt that even plants have their different characters, which impress us differently. Who can look at the cypress without respect, the gum cistus without tenderness, or the orange tree without admiration? does not the fragrance of lavender inspire the idea of a quiet and domestic home; and rosemary, this perfume peculiar to Christmas Eve, engender good and holy thoughts?

To the right and left of this spot, extend those interminable olive plantations, which form the great branch of Andalusian culture. These trees are planted at a certain distance from each other, which prevents them being gloomy, but the ground, a dead level, and cleared by the plough, imparts a monotonous appearance to the scene. At intervals, small villages belonging to the different properties meet the eye. These are built without either taste or symmetry, and even in examining them, it would be difficult to discover which is the front of the houses. The larger buildings and manufactories have nothing grand in their appearance, except their windmills, which soar above the olive trees, as if for the

purpose of keeping guard over them. These estates usually belong to the aristocracy of Seville, though they seldom reside on them, as the ladies of that city have no love of rural life; the habitations are therefore generally neglected and deserted, and only used as granaries. Thus in these isolated and solitary places, the silence is only interrupted by the crowing of the cock, vigilantly guarding his seraglio, or by the braying of some ancient donkey, turned out to grass by the overseer, and who is weary of his solitude.

Nevertheless, at the decline of a pleasant day of January, in the year 1810, the fresh and sonorous voice was heard, of a young man who seemed scarcely twenty years of age, as he walked along, his gun on his shoulder, with a light and firm step, on one of the paths in the olive thicket. His figure was tall, graceful, and flexible, and his person, his air, and his movements displayed that agility, ease, and elegance, which art endeavours to create, but which nature lavishly bestows on the Andalusians. He carried his head and its curly black locks high and haughtily, and was the model type of the handsome peasant. His large black eyes

were bright, his glance quick and full of intelligence, his well chiselled upper lip, curled with an expression of fun and satire, disclosing a white and brilliant row of teeth. Every portion of his well knit form displayed a superabundance of life, strength, and energy. Silver buttons fastened his white shirt, round his olive coloured throat. He wore a jacket of gray cloth, short breeches of the same material, attached at the knees by silk cords and tassels, and a yellow silk scarf was wound in repeated folds round his slender waist; his shoes and gaiters were made of strong, untanned leather, handsomely embroidered, and a sombrero with a wide brim, edged and trimmed with velvet and silk tassels, placed gracefully to the left on his head, completed this elegant Andalusian costume.

The youth, well known for his active habits, and his bold and intrepid character, had been appointed by the overseer of one of the estates we have described, as a guard during the season of gathering the olives. On arriving at a paling that enclosed the olive plantation, the guard, without attempting to seek for a door, vaulted over the rails into a path, where he came face to face

with another lad, rather taller than himself, who was following the same direction. His costume was much the same, but his appearance was less bold and careless. His gray eyes were less animated, and his glance more tranquil; his mouth more serious, and his smile much sweeter. Instead of a gun, he had a spade on his shoulder, and was preceded by a donkey, which he was driving along, and followed by a huge dog, with thick short hair, of a yellowish white, belonging to the handsome race of sheep dog, peculiar to Estremadura.

"Hallo! is that you, Perico? God be with you!" said the newly appointed guard.

"The same to you, Ventura," replied the other; "are you come to amuse yourself?"

"No," answered Ventura; "I have come for provisions. It is now eight days....."

"Since you saw my sister Elvira!" interrupted Perico, with his charming smile. "Good, my friend—killing two birds with one stone!"

"The less said the better, Perico; they who live in glass houses should not throw stones," answered the guard.

"You are very lucky, Ventura," continued Perico, sighing, "for you can marry



whom you please, without any one opposing it."

"And pray," asked Ventura, "what is the objection to your marrying?"

"The will of my mother," answered Perico.

"What do you say?" exclaimed Ventura. "Why is this? what fault can she find with Rita, who is young, pretty, and come of good people, as she is your first cousin?"

"That is the chief cause why my mother declares that she does not like it."

"An old woman's scruples! Does your mother intend to reform the laws of the church, that grant a dispensation for similar connexions?"

"It is not religious scruples," answered Perico, "which weigh with my mother; she says that such very close connexions are contrary to nature, that the same blood repels rather than attracts, and that sooner or later all sorts of evils, misfortunes, and discord accrue from such a tie. She relates at least a hundred examples of this."

"Pay no attention to them," said Ventura; "let her prophesy evil, and hoot like an owl. Mothers always manage to dis-

cover some objection to the marriage of their sons."

"No," answered Perico, gravely; "no, I will never marry without my mother's consent."

They went along for some moments in silence, when at length Ventura said,

"The fact is, I am like the rich merchantman, who made his crew embark, but remained on shore himself; or like the preacher, who said, do as I say and not as I do, for does not my father's will keep me as entirely in subjection, as a strong chain does a lion? You may believe, Perico, that were it not for my father, who forbids it, I should be at this very hour in Utrera, where a company of volunteers has been recently formed, to fight against those infamous traitors, who glided into our gates as friends, only in order to make themselves masters of the country, and to impose a foreign yoke on us? Do you know, Perico, that what we are now doing—seeing the others march while we stay at home—is the action of degenerate Spaniards and cowards?"

"The same thought has occurred to me," said Perico; "but how can I leave my mother and my sister, who have no resource

but me? However, I wish you to understand, that if my mother persists in preventing my marriage, I can no longer live thus, and I shall go along with the other young men. I am quite resolved."

"And you will do well," said Ventura, impressively; "as for me, some day, when they least expect it, they will call me, and I shall not answer. On that day, trust me, Perico, there shall be a few Frenchmen the less in Spain."

"But Elvira?" asked Perico.

"She must do like the others; she must wait for me—or mourn for me."

They had now arrived at their destination.

## CHAPTER II.

THE house of Perico's family was roomy, and neatly whitewashed without and within. On each side of the door, a bench of lime and stone was placed against the wall. A lamp was hanging in the porch before an image of the blessed Virgin and Child, above the inner door, according to the Catholic custom of giving religious sentiments the precedence of all others, and placing the family under a holy patron. In the centre of the spacious court stood an enormous orange tree, with its rich foliage and its solid polished trunk—a circular paling protecting its base like a cuirass. For what a number of generations had this splendid tree been a source of enjoyment to this family! The deceased Juan Alvareda, the father of Perico, clung to the tra-

ditional pretension of tracing back its existence to the date of the expulsion of the Moors, after which, according to his assertion, an Alvareda had planted it, one of the soldiers of the holy King Fernando. And when the priest, his wife's brother, laughed at him, or teased him about the antiquity and uninterrupted line of his pedigree, he replied, without being disturbed, or his conviction shaken for an instant, that all the lineages of the world were ancient, and that the direct line of succession from father to son might very possibly be extinguished among the rich, but that no such omission ever took place among the poor.

The women of the family extracted tonic decoctions from the leaves of the orange tree, beneficial to the stomach and calming to the nerves; the young girls adorned themselves with its blossoms, and dried them as sweetmeats; the children regaled their palates and refreshed their blood by its fruit; the birds made their dwelling place in its branches, and sung a thousand gay songs among its leaves, while its masters, having grown up in its shade, watered it unweariedly in summer, and in winter cut away its withered boughs.

To the right and left of the door of entrance, there were two rooms, or *partidos*, as they are called there, equal in size, consisting of a hall, with two grated windows looking on the street, and two alcoves, forming an angle with the hall, lighted by the court. At one end there was a door opening on a very large yard, containing the kitchen, the laundry, and the stables, and in its centre a fig tree paraded itself, with so little pretensions or self love, that it submitted without a murmur to be the resting place at night of the poultry, without its branches giving way under their troublesome burden, or tossing them off in revenge.

It was three years since the master of the house died. When he felt his end approaching, he sent for his son Perico, and said to him, "I leave your mother and your sister to your care; watch over the latter, and guide her, and be guided yourself by the former. Always continue to live in the holy fear of God, and think often of death, and thus you will be able to meet it without terror and without dismay. Prepare for my death, and do not dread it. All the Alvaredas have been worthy men;

the same Spanish blood runs in your veins, and the same Catholic principles live in your heart, that made them virtuous. Be like them, and you will live happily and die peacefully."

Ana, his widow, was a woman distinguished in her station, and she would have been equally so in a higher one. Educated by her brother, who was a priest, her judgment was just, her character serious, her manners dignified, her virtue instinctive. These merits, united to her easy position, endowed her with a real superiority over those by whom she was surrounded, an influence which she used without abusing. Her son, Perico, dutiful, modest, and laborious, had been her consolation, never having given her a single moment of uneasiness, except by his love for his cousin Rita.

Her daughter, Elvira, three years younger than her brother, was an orange blossom in sweetness, a violet in modesty, a lily in purity. Her childhood had been fragile, and her features, strongly resembling those of her brother, were pale and delicate, with an expression of calm resignation, which rendered her singularly attractive. From her earliest infancy she had been attached

to Ventura, the handsome, arrogant son of their neighbour, Pedro, the friend and companion of the late Juan Alvareda.

The wife of Pedro died in giving birth to a daughter, who was consequently entrusted by her father to a nun of Alcalá, the sister of his deceased wife. Thus separated from his daughter, Pedro concentrated all his affection on his son, Ventura, and with pride and delight saw him excel all the other young men in the place, in good looks, intrepidity, and activity.

Exactly opposite the house of the Alvaradas was the cottage of Maria, the mother of Rita. Maria was the widow of Ana's brother, who had been overseer of the adjacent property of Quintos. This woman was so good, so entirely without guile, so ingenuous and simple, that she was not endowed with sufficient energy and decision to mould the haughty, sharp, and obstinate disposition which her daughter Rita displayed from her earliest childhood. These bad qualities had, since that period, expanded without any control. Her character was violent, her impulses passionate, her heart cold; her face was extremely pretty, her expression *piquante*, lively, and mocking,



and with her varying colour she formed a striking contrast to her cousin Elvira. The one might be compared to a fresh rose, armed with its thorns; the other to one of those passion roses, that bear on their pale leaves a crown of thorns, as a sign of suffering, but conceal in the recesses of their chalice sweet and precious honey.

In the description and classification of this family and its dependents, we must not omit Melampo, the dog that we saw lazily trotting at Perico's heels, when returning home. We must give him a place in our narrative, for all dogs are not on an equality, even *in the eye of the law*. Melampo was a most grave and respectable animal, without pretensions even to be called Hercules or Alcides, to which he was entitled by his immense strength and prowess. He seldom barked, and never without legitimate cause; he was good tempered, and fond of good eating; he never fawned on his masters, but no possible motive ever induced him to separate from them; he never in his life had bit anybody; he loftily disdained the assaults of those small curs who ran after him, barking with stupid hostility. But Melampo had killed six foxes, and three wolves,

and one day he attacked a bull that had assailed Perico, and catching hold of the animal's ear with his teeth, he brought him along like a naughty child. By such meritorious services, Melampo had acquired the right to repose peacefully on his laurels by the fire.

### CHAPTER III.

WHEN the two young men arrived, they found Elvira and Rita leaning against the side posts of their doors. They were wrapped in mantillas of yellow chintz, trimmed with a border of black velvet, such as were usually worn at that time by women of the lower classes, instead of the cloak they now adopt. The lower part of their faces was covered, and only their eyes and foreheads visible. After having wished them good evening, Perico said to his sister,

“Elvira, look at this bird, who wishes to take wing—close his cage fast; he is all anxiety to encounter those odious French, who wish to steal into our homes.”

“It is reported,” said Ventura, “that they are approaching Seville; and are we

to see these inroads while we quietly cross our arms, without saying our lives are our own?"

"Let us put our trust in God," exclaimed Elvira, "and pray that this may never happen. Do not say there is a chance of such a misfortune. Ah! my revered patroness, Santa Ana! if thou wilt rescue us from this strait, I offer to thee what I value most, my hair, which I will plait in a long tress, tie it with a blue ribbon, and lay it on thine altar."

"And I," said Rita, "offer to the Saint two flower pots of carnations, to adorn her chapel on her feast day, if she will only grant that they should leave us as soon as possible, and not return in a hurry."

"Oh! don't say such a thing, even in jest," exclaimed Elvira.

"Let her say what she likes. Depend upon it, the Saint will prefer your hair to her carnations," observed Ventura.

At this moment appeared good, old Maria; she was older than her sister-in-law, and though scarcely sixty years of age, yet, being small and delicate, the toils that so rapidly age women of the lower classes made her appear much older. She had

wrapped her withered form in a mantilla of chesnut coloured cloth, and was shivering.

"My children," she exclaimed, on seeing them at the door of the street, "night is quenching day; you will be frozen if you stay here."

"Frozen!" replied Ventura, unbuttoning the collar of his shirt, "I am too hot; the chill must be in your bones, aunt Maria."

"Don't risk health," replied the worthy woman, "nor rely on your youth, for death does not look at a baptismal certificate. This north wind is like a knife, and I can tell you that you are more likely to get an inflammation of the lungs here, than an Indian legacy."

Saying these words, she returned into the house; the others followed, except Ventura, who went to finish his business.

They found Ana seated near the stove, the chief point of reunion, where the family and their friends usually assembled in winter; the large copper frying pan shone like gold, on its low wooden stand. The room was spacious, and its floor covered with mats and circular rugs; round the walls were rough chairs, made of reeds, with low seats and high backs; a fir table,

on which was burning a candle in a large metal candlestick, and a comfortable leather arm chair, completed the simple furniture of the room. In the alcove there was a high bed, covered by its white quilt, with starched frills; a cedar wood chest, of huge dimensions, placed upon claw feet, to preserve it from the damp of the floor; a small table, of the same wood, on which was a mahogany and glass case, containing an effigy of our Lady of Sorrows; some offerings for the dead, and the Mystic Garland, or Life of the Saints, by Father Baltasar Bosch Centellas.

After all were assembled, including Pedro, Ana's friend and neighbour, she recited her rosary, and, when she had finished, she took up her spindle and began to spin, and Elvira to knit. Pedro, who was seated in the arm chair, lighted a cigar; Perico occupied himself by roasting acorns and chesnuts at the fire, and giving them to Rita, when they were ready, and Maria continued praying in a low voice, occasionally betraying by a nod that she was saluting Morpheus.

"Well," said Perico, "water has entirely deserted us; the ground is a rock, and the

sky bronze. Last year, by this time, there had been so much rain, that you could scarcely see the ground, it was so covered by grass."

"It was, indeed," replied Pedro: "this year the cattle are dying of hunger; last year, everywhere, fodder was plentiful."

"It seems to me," remarked Elvira, in her gentle voice, "that it will soon rain. To-day the river was edged by black clouds, and these clouds, according to an old saying, are sleeping storms, and when the winds rouse them from their slumbers, they inundate the world."

"It is certainly going to rain," said Rita; "I saw to-night in the sky a watery halo round the moon."

"It will certainly rain," said Maria, startled from her dreams by the clear, loud voice of her daughter, "my rheumatic pains tell me so; winds and waters are the fruits of the weather, and it must produce them. I only feel for the poor shepherds and herdsmen who pass such nights in the open air."

"Do not fear for them, Maria," said the jovial Pedro (who had on every occasion a saying, a proverb, or a joke ready to bring forward in support of his assertions). "In

this world everything depends on habit, and what appears evil to one, may give pleasure to another: custom subdues all things like the sea, and gilds all things like the sun. A shepherd married a girl like a rose; it so chanced that the day of his wedding a tremendous tempest arose, with thunder and lightning, wind and rain. The shepherd was so pleased, that he jumped up, ran to the window, and, opening it, exclaimed, 'What famous weather! why can't I enjoy it?'

"The bride must have been rather jealous," said Rita, in fits of laughter.

Eight o'clock struck; they recited the prayer for the souls in purgatory, and shortly after separated.

When the mother and daughter were left alone, Elvira laid a white table cloth on the table, and placed on it a dish of salad. Ana and her daughter began their supper, but Perico remained seated, his head drooping on his breast, and idly stirring with the fire shovel some sparks that were still burning among the ashes.

"Don't you want any supper, Perico?" said his sister, offering him the excellent white bread that she had herself baked.



"I am not hungry," answered he, without raising his eyes.

"Are you unwell, my boy?" asked Ana.

"No! mother," was his answer.

The supper was finished in silence; and when Elvira had left the room, carrying away the dishes, Perico instantly said to his mother,

"To-morrow, mother, will see me at Utrera, where I mean to enlist among those loyal Spaniards who are going to defend their country."

Ana was petrified; accustomed to the docile submission of her son, which had never yet failed, she said,

"You are going to the wars! which is as much as to say, you mean to forsake us! but this cannot be; you neither can, nor ought, to desert your mother and your sister. I will never consent to it."

"Mother," said the exasperated youth, "I see that you are resolved invariably to oppose a barrier to all my wishes. You have always controlled my will, and now you wish to arrest my arm. You delight in throwing obstacles in my path; but, mother," continued he, animated and moved by the two great motives which rule men—

patriotism in all its purity, and love in all its ardour—"Mother, I am now two and twenty years of age, and I have sufficient strength and will to overcome every obstacle, if you force me to do so."

Ana, equally surprised and agitated, clasped her cold and tremulous hands in anguish, and exclaimed,

"What! is there no alternative between a marriage, which will make you miserable, and war, which will cost you your life?"

"None, mother," said Perico, whose dread of succumbing in this struggle, changed his naturally gentle character into austerity; "I either stay at home and marry, or I depart, to fulfil the duty of every Spanish youth."

"Then marry," said his mother, in a tone of sadness; "of two evils choose the least; but remember your mother's words, Perico: Rita is vain and light, a lukewarm Christian, and an ungrateful daughter. A bad daughter will be a bad wife. Your blood can never amalgamate. You will one day learn the truth of what your mother is now saying; but it will then be too late."

After saying these words, the noble

minded woman, who was almost suffocated by her tears, retired into the alcove, to conceal them from her son.

Perico, who loved his mother with as much tenderness as veneration, made a movement to detain her; he wished to speak, but his timidity, combined with the agitation he felt, confused his faculties so that he could not utter, but remained for a moment undecided. He then started up suddenly, passed his hand across his eyes, and left the house.

During this time Rita, who was watching in vain at her window for Perico, became both irritated and uneasy.

"Is this the manner in which I am treated?" said she at last, violently closing the window. "Now you may come if you choose, but upon my life you shall wait for me longer than I waited for you!"

At this instant a stone rolled to the foot of the wall. It was the preconcerted signal between them, to announce the arrival of Perico.

"You may go on rolling all the stones in Dos Hermanas, without inducing me to open the window," said Rita to herself. "Do you suppose that I am going to study

your whims and wishes, as submissively as your old donkey? Nothing of the kind, my good friend!"

A second stone now rebounded against the wall, thrown, apparently, with more violence than Perico usually employed.

"Hallo!" said Rita; "you seem in a hurry; it is very good for you to find out that waiting is no treat. I hear that it is raining as hard as it can pour!" And after a moment's reflection, she added, "But if I quarrel with him, it will be nuts to that hypocritical aunt of mine; she will not fail to set off to Santa Marcela, where Pedro's daughter is in a convent, kept there by her cunning old father, like a sardine in pickle, and she will carry her home with her, on purpose to introduce her to Perico. But that is a mirror they shall never look into; so to prevent it," and opening the window hastily, she finished her sentence thus, "here I am. I say," continued she in an irritated tone to Perico, "are you determined to knock down the wall? Why do you disturb me? when I am waiting for any one I am sure to go to sleep, and when I am fairly asleep, those who wake me are not likely to receive

many thanks for doing so. Go back, therefore, the way you came—or any other way—it is all the same to me.”

She made a gesture as if to close the window.

“Rita! Rita!” said Perico in an animated voice, “I have spoken to my mother.”

“Have you?” said Rita, opening wide the half closed window. “What do you say? this is as great a miracle as Balaam’s ass! And pray what did your *mater*, not *amabilis*, say in return?”

“She said yes—that we may marry!” exclaimed Perico, joyfully.

“Yes?” said Rita. “Heaven help me! how many various turns a key may make in a lock! wise people alone, I suppose, have a right to change their opinion! I will go to-morrow to pay her my compliments of condolence. How would you like, Perico, if following the example of your mother, as mine often entreats me to do, I were also to change my mind, and now say no?”

“Rita! Rita!” said the enraptured Perico, “you will be my wife!”

“That is true enough,” replied Rita; “though the word No, is like a silver

dollar, the more I look at it, the more I like it."

By these, and other nonsensical phrases, Rita succeeded in entirely effacing the solemn impression caused by his mother's warning.

#### CHAPTER IV.

On the following morning, Ana was seated in sadness and silence, when she saw Pedro enter the room.

"My good friend," said he, "here I am, because I have a particular reason for wishing to come."

"You are always welcome, neighbour."

"I wish to talk to you, seriously."

"Talk away then, my good Pedro; the more the better."

"You must know that my madcap son, Ventura, has taken it into his head to go and fight against those detestable Frenchmen, whom may Heaven confound!"

"My good neighbour! kill your enemy in fair fight, but do not invoke curses on his head. Perico also thought of the same

plan. It is severe on us, and hard to bear, friend, still it is but natural."

"I don't say that it is not—may ill luck follow these traitors!—still, Ventura is my only son, and I would not lose him for the whole of Spain. I have thought of a mode of turning him, and I came to tell it to you."

Saying these words, Pedro seated himself comfortably in the large leather arm chair, folding his cloak commodiously over his legs, and extending his feet towards the fire, lolling quite at his ease. "My worthy old neighbour," said he, with that profusion of repetitions, so common with great talkers, "I abhor preambles which serve no purpose but to exhaust the breath; affairs should be discussed with few and clear words. In, or out, my plan is this—why should I take an hour to say what can be said in five minutes? what can be done to-day, why defer it till to-morrow? in all roads, the shortest is the best — but let us come to the point, for of all things I hate circumlocution."

"Indeed, neighbour," said Ana, interrupting him, "you give me pretty good cause to think otherwise! pray come to



the point, for you have kept me in suspense from the minute you came in, till now."

"I am coming to it by degrees," answered Pedro; "I am not a musket to go off all of a sudden; people get to understand each other by talking—there is no hurry; I must say, Ana, that you are more lively than a spark, and as quick as a flash of lightning! I was saying, then, Madam Gunpowder, that I had discovered a mode of preventing Ventura's letting off the rocket he is so anxious about: and this is by taking a step, that sooner or later he must have taken—in one word, and to finish promptly, I come to entreat you to bestow your Elvira on my Ventura, and I hope the son-in-law I offer you, may please you as much as the daughter-in-law I solicit pleases me."

Ana did not attempt to conceal the satisfaction she felt at the prospect of a connection so desirable, and in every way so suitable, and which the parents of the young people had often anticipated with pleasure. They then began to discuss the articles of the contract, like the substantial people they felt themselves to be.

"Neighbour Pedro," said Ana, "you know what we have, quite as well as I do myself; the only difficulty is, to arrange how it is to be apportioned. This house has always been the property of the eldest son; the vineyard must undoubtedly go to Perico also, because he has improved it so much, and planted a considerable part afresh; my cows, too, I ought to give to him, for he must maintain me as long as I live; the ass, too....."

"Will you be so good as to tell me, my worthy Ana," interrupted Pedro, "what remains for Elvira? according to these arrangements, it seems to me that she is to leave your hands, as our Mother Eve—may she rest in peace!—did those of our Creator."

"Elvira will have the olive plantation," replied Ana.

"What a regal dowry!" exclaimed Pedro. "Truly! an olive plantation the size of a handkerchief, and which gives no oil—not even sufficient for the lamp of the saint!"

"Twenty years ago it yielded more than a hundred *arrobas*," said Ana.

"What once was, and is no longer," said

Pedro, "is just as if it had never been : twenty years ago, girls were dying of love for me."

"Forty years ago, you mean," said Ana, correcting him.

"What does it matter?" continued Pedro; "let us keep to the point. There are fewer olives in the olive plantation, than there are hairs on St. Peter's head, and those that remain look so withered that they are just like black candlesticks!"

"You must remember that it is long since you saw them. Since Perico knew that the olive plantation was to be his sister's, the trees have been as carefully cultivated as a rose bush in a flower pot. Elvira will also have the contiguous property watered by the rivulet that runs through it."

"Probably, my dear friend, this is the reason why the ground is so bleak and arid; as the brook you allude to is dry one half of the year, and devoid of water the other. Let us speak plainly. I am a man who likes unadulterated bread, and pure wine; I neither like bran in the one, nor water in the other. Those acres are poor and neglected, and of no use except as pas-

ture for a donkey; but as no one is listening, just allow me to ask you, if you did not, last year, sell two pigs fattened on barley, and each weighing fifteen arrobas, at two reals a pound? add five bushels of corn, one hundred skins of wine, and fifty of vinegar. Now this purse is kept shut up in your large cedar chest, and what occasion can be more favourable to give it a little air? When his majesty, Carlos IV., went to Xerès—so runs the tale—he was presented with a rich wine; but what wine! rather different from that of your vineyard! His majesty, who it would appear was a judge, praised the wine highly. ‘Sire,’ said the Alcade, who was much delighted—for you must know that the people of Xerès are as proud of their wine, as I of my son—‘Sire, I must inform your majesty that we have wine of a still finer quality than this.’ ‘Really!’ said the king; ‘you keep it, I suppose, for a better occasion?’ So, my excellent Ana, this anecdote is appropriate: make the application yourself.”

“But of course, Pedro, I keep all this money, and more, in safe custody for the benefit of my darling girl.”

"Now that is what I call speaking to the purpose!" exclaimed Pedro, gaily. "You are an actual Peru! As for what I mean to give Ventura, all I have will one day belong to him, since Marcela is resolved to become a nun; and I think you will admit that he will be well provided for; he will get my house....."

"Which is a crib!" said Ana.

"My donkeys....."

"Who are old!" rejoined she.

"My goats....."

"That cost you more than they are worth in fines, they are such thieves! I hope they make up for it by their milk, their cheese, and their capers."

"And my orchard," continued Pedro, paying no attention to Ana's gibes, which were indeed in revenge for his.

Thus discussing matters, they arranged the articles of the marriage contract, continuing as good friends afterwards as before. When Pedro was gone, Ana put on her cloth mantilla: and suppressing her annoyance, and endeavouring to subdue her feelings of dislike, she went to Maria's house.

Maria, who professed towards Ana—who

was very kind to her—the utmost affection and gratitude, as well as esteem and admiration, received her with open arms. “Fortunate are the eyes that see you come to this house!” she exclaimed, when Ana entered. “What happy thought brings you here?”

She then offered a chair to her guest, who seated herself, and explained the object of her visit. This proposal caused the poor widow such intense happiness, that she could not find words to express it.

“Oh! my dear sister-in-law!” exclaimed she in broken sentences, “what do you say? Perico, son of my heart! we owe this good fortune to San Antonio—and you, Ana, are you satisfied? Indeed, dear sister, though Rita is a little headstrong, she is a good girl at heart; rather wilful, but I blame myself for that. If I had brought her up as you have done Elvira, she would have been very different. You will see she is somewhat giddy, but years and matrimony will make her prudent. Her faults all arise from the way in which I have spoiled her, and her extreme youth. Rita, Rita!” she exclaimed, “run—make haste. Here is your aunt—what do I say?—your

mother? For she wishes you to become so, by marrying you to her son."

Rita entered, with all the self-possession of a banker and the calmness of a diplomatist.

"What do you say, my darling?" exclaimed the delighted mother.

"I knew it already," answered Rita, coolly.

"For shame!" whispered her mother, "you look as haughty as a duke and as cool as a cucumber!"

"What would you have, mother? Do you expect me to dance a fandango because I am going to be married?" answered Rita, aloud. Ana rose and left the house.

Maria, deeply mortified by the impertinent behaviour of her daughter, accompanied Ana to the door, lavishing on her a thousand expressions of gratitude and love.

## CHAPTER V.

THE preparations for the two weddings proceeded. The marriage of Elvira and Ventura was to be celebrated before that of Rita and Perico, because the latter, being cousins, were obliged to wait for a Dispensation from Rome.

Pedro wished that his daughter, Marcela, should attend her brother Ventura's marriage, before commencing her noviciate, so he resolved to go and fetch her from Alcalá. Maria, who was anxious to recover a debt due to her there, requiring all her money for this festive occasion, took advantage of the journey of her old friend to accompany him. The ancient couple, mounted on their respective donkeys, commenced their expedition by crossing themselves: Maria, like a good Chris-



tian, addressing a prayer to the Holy Archangel, San Rafael, patron of roads, from the days of Tobias to those of Maria.

The old woman, comfortably seated on the stuffed cushions of her side saddle, wore a wide chintz petticoat, plaited round her waist, and a black woollen jacket, the sleeves of which were tight, and fastened at the wrists by a row of silver buttons; round her throat she had a white muslin handkerchief, the ends of which were fastened behind her head with a large silver pin, to prevent its being entangled in her hair, so that she looked the model of an anticipated fashion, adopted thirty years afterwards by ladies. Her head was covered by a handkerchief, the ends of which were tied under her chin.

Pedro wore pretty much the same costume that we described in speaking of his son, only that his cloth was of a coarser material, and the border was of black wool; being a widower, the whole of his dress was less tight fitting, and his sombrero without any adornment, wider in the brim, and put on straight on his head, and not to one side, like that of his son.

"What an enchanting day!" said Maria, when they were in the open country; "the fields are so smiling, the sun seems to say to them, rejoice!"

"Yes," replied Pedro, "he has polished his ruddy face, and whetted his rays, till they prick like needles."

He took out his tobacco bag, made of goatskin, and began to smoke a cigar. "Maria," said Pedro, when this was accomplished, "I suspect you will return from Alcalá as empty handed as when you went there. What could induce you to lend money to such a scamp? Did you not know that he had scarcely sufficient to keep himself alive, and that his only possessions were hunger and poverty?"

"But, Pedro," argued Maria, "we lend to the poor, and not to the rich, who do not require help; moreover, this was a friend."

"And don't you know, you simple creature, that he who lends money to a friend, loses both money and friend! You are a good woman, but always in Bethlehem. I tell you that this man will pay you on three occasions—late, badly, or never!"

"You always think the worst, Pedro."

"The thing is certain; for the old saying is, 'Think ill of a person and you are sure to be right,'" said the crafty old man, and then he began to sing an interminable romance.

Maria said nothing, and thought quite a little; for, lulled by the gentle movements of the animal she was on, and yielding to the indolent feelings inspired by this charming Spring day, she went along half asleep. Half way there was a little inn, and when they arrived, they saw some soldiers collected, and seated on the wooden benches on each side of the door, shaded by the jutting roof. As soon as they saw the ancient pair, they began to assail them with gibes, jests, and proverbs, so common among the people, and especially among soldiers.

"Good man, where are you going with this carnival figure?" said one.

"My good woman," said another, "is the church still in existence where you were baptized?"

"Señora," said a third, "does your highness remember your wedding day?"

"Señor," asked a fourth, "are you going to Alcalá for the purpose of being betrothed to this young woman?"

"No," replied Pedro, dismounting cautiously from his donkey; "for that purpose I must wait till I come of age, and until the girl has finished growing!"

"Madam," continued the soldiers, "may we offer to assist you in dismounting from this high-spirited Arab?"

"It is the best I have, my sons," said the good old woman, quietly.

The soldiers surrounded her, and assisted her to dismount in the most kind and attentive manner. Pedro met some acquaintances in the inn, who invited him to have something to drink—a proposal he took care not to refuse—and after having drank his share, he said,

"Now it is my turn to entertain, after having been entertained. I hope that you my friends, and these other gentlemen whose names I do not know, will do me the favour to drink a glass of aniseed to my health."

"Neighbour Pedro," said a young muliteer from Dos Hermanas, "tell us a story; and I will take care that your glass shall not stand empty, that your throat may not be dry."

"Oh!" exclaimed Maria, who, after

having drunk her glass of aniseed, had seated herself on some sacks of corn, "may the saints aid me! for if Pedro once begins his long stories, we shall not arrive at our journey's end to-day."

"Is it true, my good Pedro," asked the muleteer, "what I have heard my mother say, that long ago you courted Maria, and were betrothed to her?"

"Undoubtedly; and it was much to my honour," answered Pedro.

"What a story!" exclaimed Maria; "that is a lie as big as a house! Pedro was always a boaster. In all my life I never was betrothed to any man but my husband—may he rest in peace!"

"Maria, Maria!" said Pedro, "I fear you have but a treacherous memory."

"It is true," replied Maria, "that you proposed to me one evening at the wedding of one of my cousins, and that you came that same night under my window; but you got such a fright there, that you set off running as if terror had given wings to your feet!"

"How?" exclaimed one of the guests, in fits of laughter; "is this the way in which

you make use of your heels, when you are alarmed, Pedro?"

"I do not pretend to be valiant," replied Pedro, coolly; "and I have no wish to gain the palm of martyrdom from Francesco Esteban."

"I call that fear, and not modesty," said Maria, impatiently.

"You see," said Pedro, with a wink of much drollery, "that she has not yet forgiven me; but, after all, what does it signify? I made no complaints. Still, I should just like to know," he continued, "which of you is such a thoroughly valiant Cid that you would like to encounter things of the other world—supernatural appearances?"

"There was nothing supernatural," interrupted Maria, "but your terror, for which there was no other cause than a stone rolling off the roof, disturbed by some watchful cat."

"Tell us your story, and then we can judge between you," said the guests.

"You must know," commenced Pedro, "that the window Maria pointed out to me, and which opened to the back of the house, was in a solitary part of the premises, at

the outer gate. Close by, was a holy image, before which burned a lantern. When I was looking at this light, a circumstance recurred to my mind that had taken place here a short time previously. Every night a goatherd used to pass before this image, carrying empty skins, which he always filled with milk next morning at sunrise. When he had arrived on this spot, he never scrupled to let down the lantern before the image to light his cigar. One night (it was the Vespers of All Souls), after he had lowered the lantern as usual, he could not light his cigar, for the light went out. This surprised him, for the night was calm, and there was not a breath of wind. He drew up the lantern and went on his way; but what was his terror, when chancing to turn his head, he saw the lantern lighted, and burning more brightly than ever. Recognising in this a holy warning, and sorrowful and repentant, on account of his previous desecration of the sacred flame, he made a vow in expiation, never again to light a cigar so long as he lived; and, moreover," added Pedro, seriously, "he never did."

Here there was a pause, and for a few moments no one spoke.

"We may at this moment," observed Maria, "recall what is said, when every one is silent at the same time, that an angel is flying over us, the fluttering of his wings inspiring us with awe and silence."

"Go on, Pedro," said the muleteers, and come to the point."

"Well," continued Pedro, resuming his usual jovial tone, "you may imagine that I regarded this said lantern with a considerable degree of fear and respect. Is it right, on my part, thought I, to come here courting any girl, in the very face of those blessed souls that are now in purgatory, suffering and expiating their sins? I assure you that this light shining in honour of the dead, a light which was an offering to the Lord, placed there to remind us to watch and to pray, seemed to look at me and to reproach me. At one moment sad and sorrowful, like the *De Profundis*; at others immovable, like the eye of a dead man glaring at me, and sometimes the light flamed up like a fiery finger, threatening me. One night, a stone launched by an invisible hand, hit my head with such force, that I was quite



stunned, and in attempting to run away, I tumbled into a well. Eight days afterwards, however, I took courage, and returned, but Maria would not open her window."

"Maria did not wish to see you stoned to death like St. Stephen," said the muleteer.

"Not at all," answered Pedro; "she preferred Miguel Ortiz, and I felt this so deeply, that I could not remain at Dos Hermanas at the time of the wedding, but went off to Alcalá."

"Where," added Maria, "he was so inconsolable, that he married."

"It is true," said Pedro. "My maxim always was, the King is dead, long live the King!"

"Come along Pedro, you never ending babbler!" said Maria, rising; "come along."

"Yes, we must go," said Pedro, "the sun is burning with no clouds near, and yet I do believe it is going to rain."

"Heaven grant it may!" exclaimed Maria, "for wasps and the sun, sting me with equal venom."

"Why should it rain? rain in the month of March!" said one of the muleteers.

"Don't you know, José," said Pedro,

“that January promised a lamb to March, but when March arrived, the lambs were so pretty and so playful, that January refused to perform his promise, so March indignantly said, ‘Your ewes shall remember me, when their lambs are born, in my three last days, and the three my neighbour April gives me.’ But come along—let us set off.”

“What a hurry you are in, Maria!” said one; “are you afraid of taking root?”

“No, but our donkeys don’t go the same pace that your’s do, José.”

“That is true enough,” said Pedro, assisting Maria to mount; “we are all old, Maria, her squire, and the animals. Mine is so lame, that she does not know on what foot to limp most, for she hobbles on all four, and that of Maria, if it could speak, would say she is as old as her mistress—farewell.”

“Good bye, neighbour Pedro.”

Our travellers continued their journey, and when they arrived at Alcalá, they separated, to attend to their affairs.

An hour afterwards they met again. Pedro was accompanied by his daughter, who threw herself into Maria’s arms, with

all the impulsive tenderness of nuns and children; that is, of those beings whose hearts are not yet chilled, wounded, or perverted by strife with the world. Maria affectionately returned her caresses.

"Did you recover your money?" asked Pedro, with anxiety.

"He offered me one half now," said Maria, "or the whole at harvest time, and as I require all my money at present, I preferred the first."

"A Solomon, Maria, a Solomon! blessed is he that possesses! A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Pedro took his daughter behind him, and they commenced their journey home, Aunt Maria carefully guarding her money, Marcela the flowers, fruits, and sweetmeats she had brought with her as a treat for her cousins, while Pedro took care of them both.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE arrival of Marcela was a cause of great rejoicing to all. Rita neither could nor wished to conceal her ill humour at the presence of her who had been destined by both families to become the wife of Perico. The hostile spirit, and cold reserve that Rita imposed on Perico, in his intercourse with Marcela, were the first chill hitherto experienced by the spring of this pure soul. Marcela was far from suspecting the ignoble and unfriendly sentiments of Rita; besides, it would not have been possible for her to comprehend them, for Marcela, though a young woman, had still the soul of a child. Having lived in a convent ever since she was born, she had enjoyed an agreeable existence, in a confined circle, which the interests and passions of life

only extend often at the cost of happiness and innocence. She loved the good nuns, her garden, and her pleasing and quiet occupations; she was devoted to her prayers, to her church, and its holy images. She wished to become a nun, not from religious exaltation, but because she felt a real vocation; not from misanthropy, but in gladness of heart; not from the want of an agreeable home, or position in the world, which is not unfrequently a reason for taking the veil, but because she found in her convent a happy home. This is what many persons cannot understand, or affect not to understand. Everything else seems easily comprehended in this world, every irregularity, every vice, every evil inclination; but a tranquil and retired life, without anxiety either for the present or the future, inspires the minds of the profane with incredulity and repugnance. In the world, people are easy of belief; they believe in the levity of woman, in the morals of thieves, in the philanthropy of the guillotine; they believe in the inhabitants of the moon, and in other *puffs*, as the English call them, or *canards*, as the French say, or *bolas*, as we say in Spain. That satirical sceptic, called the

world, gladly accepts all this, for nothing is so credulous as incredulity, nor so superstitious as irreligion; but it resolutely disbelieves in instincts of purity, in modest desires and humble hearts, and in religious sentiments. The existence of such feelings must be imaginary; a piece of hypocrisy, which they cannot swallow. Our Minotaur's throat is not wide enough for that. By those philosophers who pretend to guide public opinion, a nun is indeed either a victim sacrificed, or a monster, violating the laws of nature, and its sacred instincts. The *sacred instincts* of the world are certainly neither very noble, nor very elevated, for they give rise to the woman of levity, and repudiate the woman who is religious, chaste, and humble.

We trust our countrymen will never be so ignoble as to be perverted by such impious and dangerous maxims.

The first time that Marcela left the house, she went accompanied by Ana and Elvira to church, and to the chapel of the saint, the patroness of the place. The good wife of the sacristan hastened to admit them. The chapel was long and narrow: at one end was the altar with the effigy of

the saint, and in a crystal urn embedded in the altar, there was a cross and a bell. The effigy of Santa Ana was very ancient. On her breast was the Virgin, holding the infant Jesus in her arms. The remote origin imprinted on this figure, combining antiquity of ideas as well as of materials, gave as it were wings to the devotion it inspired, enabling the soul to soar above this present evil world. There were also a quantity of *ex votos* suspended at the sides of the altar.

"What do these ears of corn signify?" said Marcela, pointing to a bunch of wheat ears tied with a blue ribbon.

"They were brought here," said the sacristan's wife, "by Petrola, Gomez's wife. These poor people had nothing to depend on for their livelihood, except the daily labour of the father, who had eight children. They solicited the management of a field, which they sowed with seed. In it all their hopes were centred, they saw future prosperity in it, as if it had been a mirror, and they had a right to do so, for the crop was very fine; it grew so luxuriantly, that it seemed as if it had been watered with holy water. One day a neigh-

bour came to them to say, that locusts were in the wheat. Locusts! one of the plagues of Egypt. A flash of lightning from heaven could not have more effectually stunned the poor woman. She rushed out in a state of desperation, and scarcely knowing what she was doing, she left her husband and her children, and, continuing her course headlong, she cried with outstretched arms, 'Santa Ana! Santa Ana! it is the bread of my children.' When she arrived in the field, she saw the traces of the locusts in one part of the field, by the corn being snapped off short from the root; but between this spot and the rest of the field, an invisible barrier seemed to have been raised, to guard the corn of the devout mother, who had invoked the aid of the saint. You may imagine the joy and gratitude of the good woman, but being very poor, she could only show her thankfulness, by bringing this bunch of corn in honour of the saint."

Ana, Elvira, and Marcela listened to this narration with humble and fervid hearts. I have transferred it to paper with the same feelings. May it be read by others with equal interest!



## CHAPTER VII.

MAY was smiling; gilded by the sun, delightful from the songs of its birds, and the buzzing of its thousands of insects, fragrant with blossoms, gay and glad, from being the month, that happiest of all months, dedicated to Maria. The wedding day of Ventura and Elvira had arrived, and on this day the sun had risen with all the radiance of a friend anxious to be the first to congratulate them. They were on the point of setting out to go to church. Ana straining to her heart the daughter she so fondly loved, the gentle Elvira, so humble and unassuming in her happiness, that she bent her head overwhelmed, and cast down her eyes as if dazzled by her felicity. Pedro, happier than he had ever been in his life, surpassed himself in jokes, and jests,

and stale proverbs. Maria delighted with the happiness around her, shed tears of joy, like those drops of water which sometimes fall from a placid sky, in which the sun is shining, and as they flash brightly across its rays, so Maria's tears glittered through her smiles.

"My dear sister," said Marcela to Elvira, "my own holy spouse is, in my eyes, the most desirable of all, but your bridegroom, Ventura, is indeed an excellent young man. How well he looks! how handsome he is! If he had a bunch of lilies in his hand, he would resemble San José at his betrothal."

She had good reason to praise her brother, for Ventura, handsomely and richly dressed, animated and gay, hurrying the party to set off, was the very type a sculptor would have chosen for an Achilles.

Perico forgot Rita for a moment, in gazing at the large, mild, gray eyes of his sister, with a deep feeling of inexpressible tenderness. Rita alone looked weary and indifferent. Melampo seemed to think that there was a great fuss about nothing, and laid down to sleep under the orange tree, which shook down its blossoms as if wish-

ing to adorn with them the path of the bride.

They were just leaving the house, when a strange noise reached their ears; it seemed composed of the bellowings of a goaded bull and the wailings of a wounded stag, or the roar of surprise uttered by a lion assailed in his den. It was caused by the cries of rage and terror of bands of fugitives arriving, and by exclamations of fear and indignation from those who were preparing to fly.

The French, who had entered Seville by forced marches, were now pursuing their devastating progress towards Cadiz. Perico having foreseen this unfortunate event, had prepared a place of refuge for his family, in a solitary farmhouse, far removed from every road, and intended chiefly as stabling for animals. While the men hurried to the yard to get ready the mules, the terrified women fetched out their clothes, and tied them up in bundles, loading the panniers as heavily as they could.

"What a sad omen, Ventura," said Elvira to him. "On the very day that was to have united us, we must separate."

"Nothing can ever separate us even-

tually, Elvira," answered Ventura; "I defy any one ever to do so. Go in peace—I must get ready, and we shall overtake you on the road."

Ventura saw her depart under the care of Perico, and did not return to the house till he had lost sight of them. But already was heard at the entrance of the village the fatal sound of the drums, announcing the approach of the terrible armed phalanx which everywhere attacked the poor helpless villagers, taken by surprise, and treated as slaves. They came in the name of that iniquitous usurpation, whose proceedings were those of barbarous ages, as much as the resistance they encountered was worthy of more heroic times, though these brave men were forced to succumb, combating without glory, and yielding with dignity.

"Follow me, father," said Ventura; "come, sister, we must fly."

"It is too late," replied Pedro, "they are close at hand; "but hide yourself, Ventura, and your sister. When night comes we will fly, but let us conceal ourselves for the moment."

"And you, father?" asked Ventura,

vacillating between necessity, and the repugnance he felt to conceal himself.

"As for me," replied Pedro, "I shall stay here. What could they do to a poor old man like me? Come, you must obey me, and conceal yourselves. Marcela, why do you stand there as cold and as stiff as a marble statue? Ventura, what are you thinking of, not to move? Do you wish to lose your life, and to ruin your sister? Ventura, my son, do you wish to be my death?"

His father's cry of anguish roused Ventura from the stupor into which he had fallen, caused by uncertainty, surprise, and rage. "It is inevitable," muttered he, clenching his hands and his teeth; "father, father! must I hide like a woman?—so long as I live I shall feel this shame clinging to me!" and taking up a ladder, he placed it against a gap in the roof, leading to a loft or granary, where seeds and old lumber were kept; he made a sign to his sister to ascend the ladder, and then following her, he drew it up after him.

It was time, for some one was shouting at the door. Pedro opened it. A French grenadier entered.

"Get ready something to eat and drink," said he, to Pedro, in his jargon. "Give me all the money you have got, unless you wish me to come and take it; and call your daughters, or I will go and seek them myself."

The blood of the proud and excellent Spaniard rushed to his face; however, he replied with moderation, "I have not one of the things you demand."

"What do you mean, you old rascal, by saying you have nothing? Do you know who you are speaking to? Do you know that I am hungry and thirsty?"

Pedro, who had intended to pass the whole of the famous day of his son's wedding in Ana's house, and had consequently provided nothing, went to the door leading to the interior of the house, and pointing to the extinguished fire, he repeated, "I assure you there is nothing to eat in the house but bread."

"All lies!" exclaimed the Frenchman, furiously; "it is nothing but ill will on your side."

Pedro fixed his eyes on the grenadier, sparkling with all the indignation, rage, and resentment that filled his heart; but a

second thought made him restrain his feelings, and looking down, he said, in a conciliatory tone, "Search yourself, and you will see that I speak the truth."

On hearing this obstinate denial, the soldier, who was already exasperated by Pedro's angry glance, came close up to him, saying, "You dare to brave me! you obstinately refuse to give me what you are bound to give, and, to crown all, you presume to insult me by your cool contempt! but I will make you as pliable as a glove," so saying, he raised his hand, and the short, abrupt sound of a blow was distinctly heard in the room.

Like an eagle stooping on his prey, Ventura jumped down from the loft, and rushed on the Frenchman, and drawing his sword from the scabbard, pierced him with it. The soldier fell heavily on the floor, an inert mass.

"My son, my son! what have you done?" exclaimed the old man, forgetting the insult he had received in his anxiety from knowing his son's peril.

"My duty, father."

"It has proved your destruction."

"What matters it, if I have revenged you?"

"Fly—fly!—do not lose a moment."

"Not before I convey out of this house the debtor who has paid in full. If they found him here, they would make you pay for me."

"Never mind—never mind!" exclaimed Pedro; "save yourself, that is the main point."

Ventura, without heeding his father's remonstrances, lifted up the corpse, and placing it on his shoulders, carried it to the well, and then turning to his father, who was following him in an agony of distress, he asked his blessing, and vaulted on the top of the wall of the courtyard, jumping down on the other side, while his poor father, seated on the trunk of the fig tree, and grasping its branches to support himself, his heart heavy, his eyes dimmed with tears, and breathless with misery, saw his son, the idol of his heart, dart across the space that separated the village from an olive plantation, with the fleetness of a deer, and disappear in the thicket.



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